

# Elementary English



ORGAN OF THE

NATIONAL

COUNCIL

OF

TEACHERS

OF

ENGLISH



NOVEMBER,  
1955

RUTH KRAUSS  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE BETTER  
THE CHRISTMAS PROGRAM  
CHILDREN AND TV



From Ruth Krauss' *A Very Special House* (Harper & Bros.)

# Elementary ENGLISH

An official organ of the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

704 S. Sixth St., Champaign, Ill.

FOUNDED, 1924, BY C. C. CERTAIN

JOHN J. DEBOER, *Editor*

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

(Send all editorial communications to 300 Gregory Hall, The University of Illinois, Urbana, Ill.)

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NOVEMBER, 1955

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ELEMENTARY ENGLISH is published monthly from October through May by the National Council of Teachers of English at 704 S. Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois. Subscription price \$4.00 per year; single copies 55 cents. Orders for less than a year's subscription will be charged at the single copy rate. Postage is prepaid on all orders from the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama Canal Zone, Republic of Panama, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, Hawaiian Islands, Philippine Islands, Guam, Samoan Islands, Virgin Islands and Spain. Postage is charged extra for Canada and for all other countries in the Postal Union as follows: 24 cents on annual subscription (total \$4.24), on single copies 3 cents (total 58 cents). Patrons are requested to make all remittances payable to THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH in checks, money orders, or bank drafts. Claims for missing numbers should be made within the month following the regular month of publication. The publishers expect to supply missing numbers free only when losses have been sustained in transit and when the reserve stock will permit. All communications should be addressed to THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, 704 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois. Entered as second class matter December 30, 1942, at the post office at Champaign, Illinois under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Seymour, Indiana.

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Printed in the U. S. A.



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An eager boy with the wind blowing through his red hair, his blue eyes fixed on far horizons is the way the author and the artist, *Leo Politi*, see Columbus. The story and pictures in this book—made for reading aloud—follow the highlights of the great adventure from the time Columbus the boy runs down a street in Genoa to the sea, on to the triumphant start of the second voyage.

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This charming Christmas book, one of a group of festival stories by the author-artist, is set in old Pennsylvania during Conestoga wagon days. Among the fascinating old-time customs which are a part of this book is that of making a Christmas "putz," or manger scene.

Ages 5-9 \$2.00

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*By Way of Introduction . . .*

Mrs. ANNE MARTIN, a Teachers College, Columbia University, graduate student, was introduced to us by Professor Leland B. Jacobs, who has been in very large measure responsible for the success of our series on the authors of children's books. Her fine article on Ruth Krauss continues this year's discussions of author-illustrators.

Many of our readers were delighted to find Sloan Wilson's intelligent and beautifully written discussion of the work of the public schools in the October *Harper's*. One of them, Dr. Max Herzberg, thought it should be brought to the attention of those teachers who had missed it. The editor agreed, and Harper's was kind enough to consent. It was good to read the article again.

Mrs. CARMEN WEARY, who shows in this issue how creative writing may be used to develop communication skills in the early grades, has taught in elementary schools for ten years, and has been a primary supervisor in Mesa, Arizona. At present she is a Phoenix school principal.

We talk so often of using "community resources." In her article, Mrs. MILDRED BORTON describes with vividness and verve the way in which she utilized parents' occupations in developing language arts abilities in her children. We wish we could give credit, by name, to the many children, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and members of industry and the press who helped to make this project possible.

The article by HAZEL S. RENCH and FRANCES M. MORONEY deals with a sub-

ject of great interest to parents and teachers alike. Miss RENCH, an advanced graduate student at Teachers College, Columbia University, is Associate Professor of Education at Brockport Teachers College, State University of New York, and co-author of the Yearbook, *An Eleven-Year Old Finds Himself*. Miss Moroney is Assistant Professor at the same institution and teacher in the campus school. She is author and editor of numerous publications, including a series of spelling texts published by Catholic Education Press.

The place of children's writing in the first grade has been a matter of some controversy. In the article by SYLVIA ROSE, we learn that at least some first grade children can become quite proficient by the end of the year.

More and more we realize that the task of teaching reading can best be accomplished by close and intelligent cooperation between school and home. In this issue MARY POLHEMUS offers valuable suggestions for making such cooperation possible.

LOIS V. JOHNSON and MARY BANY are familiar contributors to this magazine. This month they tell the delightful story of a Christmas project in the grades. Perhaps someone will wish to contribute a similar article on the Jewish festival.

We are pleased to present once more Professor PAUL WITTY's annual report on children and TV. His findings answer many vital questions relating to the phenomenal growth of television and its impact on the lives of children.



# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

XXXII

NOVEMBER, 1955

No. 7

ANNE MARTIN

## Ruth Krauss: A Very Special Author

With the removal of fairy tales from the nursery, and the advent of the realistic "here and now" type of story, there has been some lament that there is no longer any "imagination" in books for young children. Many adults have felt that the pre-school child is being brought up almost exclusively on a literary diet of steam shovels, trains, tugboats, tractors, and the like, which might serve to limit his outlook on life to its narrowly technological and mechanical aspects. Perhaps in reaction to this tendency, or perhaps merely accidentally, there has recently developed a new kind of imaginative picture book literature, not dependent on the stylized conventions of the fairy tale, which draws its inspiration from children's own fantasies, desires, word play, and sense of humor.

One of the pioneers in this development was Margaret Wise Brown whose seemingly rambling, pointless, and "silly"

stories made many parents shake their heads in wonder at the odd tastes of their young children who were enchanted with these books. At present, other authors are striking out into new writing patterns of their own on the picture book level. One



Ruth Krauss

of these is Beatrice Schenk de Regniers, whose highly individualized style has evoked a great deal of interest and discussion. Perhaps the most controversial (among adults, at least) is Ruth Krauss who has probably gone further than any other author in experimenting with the form and content of

picture books.

After reading through Miss Krauss' books, one may first be impressed by the wide range of mood and purpose. There is the quiet determination in *The Carrot Seed*, the whimsical word play in *Bears*,

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the warm tenderness in *The Bundle Book*, the boisterous fun in *A Very Special House*, the practical (and impractical) advice to bored youngsters in *How to Make An Earthquake*. In spite of this variety,



there seem to be certain underlying assumptions about children which have shaped the style and content of all of Miss Krauss' books. While such assumptions are only implicit and are never formulated into a doctrine, they might be stated somewhat along these lines:

That children are neither cute darlings to be patronized, nor miniature adults to be civilized, but rather lively, well-organized people with codes, ideas, and ambitions of their own which often need a chance to be worked out.

That children are fascinated by language—the trying out of nonsense syllables, the defining of familiar terms, the groping for expression of feelings, the striving to communicate ideas.

That children, like older people, have special dreams and desires which can only be gratified by fantasy, and that they love to indulge in these day dreams.

That children have an exuberance and joy in daily living, and an irrepressible sense of the ridiculous which may differ radically from an adult's idea of what is funny.

That these assumptions are so clearly conveyed in her picture books, indicates that Miss Krauss has made good use of some special abilities and advantages. It is clear from her material that Miss Krauss has had close contact with young children which permitted her to observe carefully their patterns of speech, make-believe games, and ways of telling stories or narrating events. She has an ear for the kind of word play and nonsense talk that brings immediate response from children, and an unusual insight into some of the complicated emotions and relationships beneath children's verbal expressions. Along with the craftsmanship to organize her material effectively so that it becomes meaningful and enjoyable to the child reader, Miss Krauss has added one extra dimension—the experimental attitude. When her material demanded it, she has permitted herself to depart from the conventional form of children's books in an attempt to create new, more suitable forms. Since pictorial representation is of primary importance in books for young children, Miss Krauss has been fortunate in the collaboration of good artists whose illustrations serve to represent, clarify, and even interpret the action and mood of the texts. Probably the best way to illustrate all the foregoing assertions is to examine rather closely the content and style of the books themselves.

Three of the earlier books seem to be definitely related in theme and execution. These are *The Carrot Seed*, *The Growing Story*, and *The Backward Day*. All are written in a casual but concise style (*The Carrot Seed* almost abruptly in terse, single sentences on each page) and all tell an uninterrupted story without digressions or

explanations. All have an atmosphere of calm but single-minded drive towards a climax. In each book, an unnamed "little boy" is obsessed with a particular idea or plan which he follows through purposefully and successfully to the end. In *The Growing Story*, the little boy is determined to find out whether he himself is growing like the animals and plants around him, and, after a summer of discouraging doubts, he triumphantly shouts out his proof when he tries on his winter clothes, "Hey! . . . My pants are too little and my coat is too little. I'm growing too." In *The Backward Day*, "A little boy woke up one morning and got out of bed. He said to himself, 'Today is backward day.'" This gives him the opportunity of doing such wonderfully peculiar things as walking downstairs backwards, wearing his underwear over his coat, and saying "goodnight" at breakfast time. In both these books, the boys' families are amazingly patient and cooperative. In *The Carrot Seed*, however, the little boy has to pursue his project of planting and caring for a carrot seed against the scorn and disbelief of his whole family until, in a highly effective understatement, comes the emphatic climax, "And then, one day, a carrot came up just as the little boy had known it would" (dramatized by a humorous illustration of a giant carrot on a wheelbarrow).

These may seem like trivial plots to adults, and hardly worth writing about, but to a young child it is tremendously exciting to know that he is part of a growing world, or that sometimes he may be right and his elders mistaken, or that by his own actions he may, at least temporarily, change the established habits of daily life. These ideas open up a whole

realm of speculations to the child about his own place as an autonomous individual, no longer completely dependent on adults, capable of initiating and completing projects of his own. At the same time, there is the humorous acceptance of limitations. In *The Backward Day*, after a maximum exploitation of his lovely idea, the little boy realizes its impracticability (and perhaps also its gradual monotony) and is permitted to make a dignified withdrawal of the whole cumbersome business by merely starting the day all over again, this time frontwards.

With the possible exception of *The Growing Story* which lacks the light touch of the other two, these books can also be enjoyed purely at the story level without any deeper implications. The appealing, wide-eyed stoic in *The Carrot Seed* (incidentally, this, like many of the other books, is illustrated by Crockett Johnson, the author's husband and well-known creator of Barnaby) is lovable just for himself, and the blandly described details of what is involved in doing things "backward oh backward oh backward oh backward oh backward" are completely satisfactory in their own right. Whatever other implications there may be, they are injected subtly enough so that the reader may be aware of them or not, according to his own capabilities or desires.

In just the same way, *The Bundle Book*, where a pleasant young mother spends a long time guessing just what the "strange bundle" on her bed might be, can be enjoyed merely as a guessing game (and what young child doesn't love to play at hiding and "fooling" his parents) and for Helen Stone's soft, accurate illustrations of the squirming bundle. But be-

yond the fast-moving story line there emerges a strong and almost inescapable feeling of a real and unsentimental love relationship between this mother and her child, a feeling with which the young reader can easily identify because this love relationship, or lack of it, with his own parents is one of the most important things in his life.

In contrast to these books, *The Happy Day* and *Bears* make their appeal purely on the fun and nonsense level. The text of *The Happy Day* is perhaps somewhat disappointing. In rhythmically relating the story of several species of hibernating animals which discover a miraculous flower growing in the snow, the text becomes almost monotonously repetitious with its constant refrain of "They sniff. They run. They run. They sniff." Fortunately, the suspense is sustained and the climax heightened by Marc Simont's admirable black and white illustrations of warm, sleepy, furry animals suddenly galvanized into swiftly graceful action. The contrasts of warmth and cold, sleep and rapid motion, search and discovery, come through in spite of a rather artificial plot.

The ingenious, tongue-tickling text of *Bears*, however, is quite equal to Phyllis Rowand's masterful illustrations of ridiculous, lovable bears of all sizes and amazing capabilities. These "bears everywhere" are a special species, closer to teddies than to zoo bears, as they slide down bannisters "on the stairs," are lost in suds while "washing hairs," and do practically anything as long as it rhymes. The only possible false note may be the inclusion of "millionaires" whose top hats and cigars are quite meaningless to two and three-year old readers, but that's an in-

significant objection. *Bears* is the kind of book that young children can look at repeatedly, finding previously undiscovered details in the pictures, "reading" and giggling at the text, even inventing more rhymes in the same vein.

All the previously discussed books are written in a straight-forward, economical style, the writer being an objective author telling a story. *I Can Fly*, Miss Krauss' con-



tribution to the Little Golden Book series, might be considered a transition piece. It marks a shift away from the style of the earlier books toward the experiments with a first person narrative in a child's own idiom of speech and thought carried out in *A Hole Is To Dig*, *A Very Special House*, and *I'll Be You and You Be Me*. Very close in spirit to *Bears*, *I Can Fly* is an invitation to make-believe and mimicry full of delightfully silly rhymes ("Who can walk like a bug? Me! Ug ug.") very much like the ones children improvise all the time. The ending is an inspired burst of "Gubble gubble gubble, I'm a mubble in a pubble. I can play I'm anything that's anything. . ." Illustrated in Mary Blair's witty, colorful pictures, this book is probably one of the most successfully executed

of the very inexpensive picture books. Where *I Can Fly* tentatively approaches a child's way of talking and playing, there is a real evolution in the other three books from a reflection of a child's world in *A Hole Is To Dig* to an increasingly abstract representation of children's desires and feelings in *A Very Special House* and *I'll Be You And You Be Me*. All three are illustrated in Maurice Sendak's expressive black and white drawings which are sensitively responsive to the changing form of the texts.

*A Hole Is To Dig* contains a group of unrelated definitions of familiar objects



vision of what is true and important. Thus we can smile at "a face is so you can make faces," but we can only hold our breaths at "a dream is to look at the night and see things." In our harried life of household worries about orderliness and sanitation, it is well to be reminded that "dogs are to kiss people," or that "mud is to jump in and slide in and yell doodleedoodleedoo," and concepts in a child's world, expressed in the way children would, and in most cases probably really did, explain these terms. For older children and adults, this book is a funny and even touching experience because the definitions are such a curious combination of incredible narrowness

of understanding and a vastly profound. There are also bits of that pre-school age humor which can be so exasperating to adults, such as "a tablespoon is to eat a table with," followed by an appropriate pantomime, probably at great length. Perhaps this book has almost more to say to older people than to young children. For the child who lives within these concepts, the book is enjoyable because it is a true picture of his world. For the adult who has pigeonholed familiar objects too easily and thoughtlessly, it is a glimpse into a kaleidoscopic range of meanings.

*A Very Special House* depicts another aspect of the child's life—his dream world, as opposed to the real world in *A Hole Is To Dig*. This lively fantasy embodies all the exciting things a particular little boy would like to do in a house of his own, and they are also the things that are usually most disapproved by parents and teachers. Walls are to draw on, chairs are to climb on, doors to swing on, beds to jump on. The house is filled with rioting, scurrying animals (and a giant) with which to share secrets, play wild games, and shout delicious nonsense words like "ooie ooie ooie." The climax is a mad confusion of shouting and mischief where "nobody ever says stop stop stop." Yet all the time the little boy knows that this special house is "right in the middle—oh it's ret in the meedle—oh it's root in the moodle of my head head head." He is content just to think about it, and, to show that he was just fooling anyway, he punctuates his stream of imagination with a crazy jump in the air which lands him "bung" down on his bottom, at which he exits with a happy, shamefaced smile. Obviously, the child reader can also gain a



harmless release of his disapproved desires on the verbal, imaginative level. The humor in text and pictures is of the slapstick variety, though there are also several nasty digs at the social conventions of the adult world.

It is an amazing feat that Miss Krauss has successfully depicted a world of riot, chaos, and confusion by employing a strictly disciplined, rhythmical, almost lyrical style in symmetrical form. The text begins and ends on the note of clowning to the sound of "dee dee dee oh," and the real narrative begins and ends with the chant of "I know a house—it's not a squirrel house, it's not a donkey house . . ." The build-up from a rather calm description of the house, through an increasingly excited portrayal of activity, until the noisy climax, is achieved through the skillful change from long complete sentences, to interrupted thoughts, to irregular short phrases, and finally to the large print repetition of a single word. The deceptively easy, natural flow of the monologue is actually accomplished only by means of an extremely controlled style, carefully worked out to the last nonsense syllable.

In connection with *A Very Special House* it is interesting to mention an earlier book by Ruth Krauss which, though very different in purpose and style, somewhat foreshadows her later books. *The Big World and the Little House* is a self-conscious, almost moralistic attempt to describe the relationship between the world and the individual. The style is uneven, and there is an awkward juxtaposition of varying ideas and moods. But there is also something of the poetic, rhythmical quality of *A Very Special House* in many passages such as:

Inside the house there were no beds, no tables, no chairs. No rugs were on its floors, no pictures on its walls. No smoke was in its chimney. At night it was part of the dark.

A more startling resemblance lies in some of the ideas which were later developed more fully in *A Very Special House*, though of course in a different context. In the little house "you could put your feet on the chairs and it didn't hurt them," and grandma painted the walls "with one wall special for drawing pictures on. It was also special for washing them off." Perhaps the "special house" had its genesis in the "little house," four years before its actual creation.

Turning from *A Very Special House* to *I'll Be You And You Be Me* is somewhat akin to turning from *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Ulysses*. In both cases there is the tremendous step from a challenging but easily understandable plot line to a fragmentary, constantly shifting point of view and emphasis. It would certainly be ridiculous to make a real comparison between Ruth Krauss and James Joyce, but there is no doubt that this book is an experiment with a completely new art form for children.

The general themes of the book may be vaguely described as feeling tones—loving, liking, dreaming, wishing, wanting, happiness, and probably a few others. In order to express these, Miss Krauss uses a variety of literary forms, including stories, poems, monologues, a play, a parody, a near-parable, and even "a mystery." Within this large variety of forms there are basically two kinds of writing: first, the same child-like material with which Miss Krauss proved herself to be so proficient in *A Hole Is To Dig* and *A*



*Very Special House*, and, secondly, an adult expression of what the child may be feeling, an apparent attempt to express for the child some things that he feels deeply but doesn't, or perhaps can't, often discuss.

The first type of writing, which makes up the bulk of the selections in this book, is represented by such items as the monologue by an older child about a baby:

he can't talk yet  
but I can understand him—  
even when he's over at his house and he  
yells and nobody knows what he means—  
I know. I could tell other people for  
him . . .

The second type of writing can be most clearly exemplified by such fragments as "A horse that's lost could be dreaming of the girl that's going to find him." In this passage there is again an echo of *The Big World and the Little House* in the intensity of feeling that doesn't quite come across. Perhaps that is because an adult, using adult symbolism, is speaking not as an adult writing for children, but as a child representing supposedly childish feelings. The result can not be genuine expression for either child or adult.

Because the themes of this book are so large and generalized, there seems to be a lack of focus and unity, although most of the individual pieces are significant and self-contained. It would have been a shame to exclude such gems as "I think I'll grow up to be a bunny before I grow up to be a lady," and its inclusion could probably be justified in terms of the theme of friendliness and intimacy, but there is no one feeling or direction strong enough to pull all these little pieces into a comprehensive whole. Thus this experiment comes dangerously close to being an ordi-

nary collection, not because the form itself is necessarily unwieldy, but because the internal structure has not been sufficiently integrated. Yet there is a degree of freedom in the development of theme and mood in both text and illustration (at one point the artist draws a complete dream sequence which is not described in the text at all) which is almost impossible in the more traditional books for children. While this book is not altogether equal to its conception or to the excellence of some of its individual parts, it certainly points the way to new creative art forms in the field of writing for children.

Miss Krauss' latest book to date, *Is This You?*, is less impressive than her other work. Similar in purpose to her earlier *How To Make An Earthquake*, this book is of the how-to-amuse-yourself variety in that it gives instructions for producing an original book. But while *How To Make An Earthquake* contains a number of ingenious ideas, some of them undoubtedly originated by children and explained in the familiar pattern of children's make-believe ("one person has to be the World. And then somebody has to be the sun . . ."), *Is This You?* is built on the single pattern of ludicrous possibilities. Thus to the question "Is this how you take a bath?" one illustration depicts a little boy in a bird bath, and another in a hippopotamus pool. Some breakfast eating suggestions include a piano leg and an earthworm. While some of the combinations are genuinely funny, the rigid pattern produces an effect of rather forced humor, and the kind of book the child is instructed to make comes close to the dull, standardized composition topics of "My Family," "My Home," "My Friends," etc. In spite of the

book's cleverness and amusing illustrations, it forces the reader into specific and stereotyped responses. In *How To Make An Earthquake*, on the contrary, there is much scope for imaginative play. Many of the ideas may have a very familiar ring to parents and teachers. Few children can resist the delight of playing parent and subjecting their adult "child" to an ordeal of this sort:

Then you take the child by the hand and say, "You *have* to.  
Come on. Let's go."  
And the child says, "No no no." And the child cries.  
But you make the child go to the party anyway . . .

The detailed descriptions of such common childhood amusements as making "mish-mosh" out of odd bits of food, elevate these to the status of important projects and real games. Even a quite young child can get much satisfaction out of following step by step directions, especially when they are written in language close enough to his own so that he can understand them easily.

Since *Is This You?* is not a story book and is somewhat out of line with most of Miss Krauss' writing, it gives little indication of the direction she intends to follow. It remains to be seen whether she will revert to some of her earlier styles, or continue to work along the lines of *I'll Be You And You Be Me*, or perhaps strike out into completely new areas of experi-

mentation. Whatever path Miss Krauss will take, it is almost certain that young readers will leave analysis, criticism, puzzlement, and amazement to the adults. For them a Ruth Krauss book "is to look at" over and over again, to quote from and laugh at and talk about, and even (going along with Sendak's illustrations) to hug lovingly and to drop off to sleep with.

#### Books by Ruth Krauss\*:

- The Carrot Seed*, ill. by Crockett Johnson, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1945.  
*The Growing Story*, ill. by Phyllis Rowand, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947.  
*Bears*, ill. by Phyllis Rowand, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1948.  
*The Happy Day*, ill. by Marc Simont, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1949.  
*The Big World and the Little House*, ill. by Marc Simont, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1949.  
*The Backward Day*, ill. by Marc Simont, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950.  
*I Can Fly*, ill. by Mary Blair, Simon & Shuster, New York, 1950.  
*The Bundle Book*, ill. by Helen Stone, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1952.  
*A Hole Is To Dig*, ill. by Maurice Sendak, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1952.  
*A Very Special House*, ill. by Maurice Sendak, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1953.  
*I'll Be You And You Be Me*, ill. by Maurice Sendak, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1954.  
*How To Make An Earthquake*, ill. by Crockett Johnson, Harper & Brothers, 1954.  
*Is This You?*, ill. by Crockett Johnson, William R. Scott, Inc., New York, 1955.

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\*Two of Miss Krauss' books, *A Good Man and His Good Wife* and *The Great Duffy*, were unavailable and are therefore not included.

## Public Schools Are Better than You Think<sup>1</sup>

Ever since the war, I've put up with about as much debate concerning the public schools as I can stand quietly, and I'm going to get into the act. Of course, I'm no great expert on the technical aspects of the thing, but I need only to inspect the torrent of recent books and articles attacking or defending the schools to realize that this is a subject which offers marvelous opportunities to a writer tired of research. Here is a field in which uninformed opinions are at a premium. A truly ignorant man can easily work himself up into a feverish fury about the public schools, and in a brief article or book can unburden himself of enough righteous indignation to heat a summer hotel in January.

On the other hand, a person who has really learned something about the schools is almost hopelessly crippled when it comes to writing genuinely dramatic books and articles. He finds he has to qualify his generalities, and all kinds of awkward facts keep getting in the way of rich, rolling prose and sweeping accusations. For a man who seeks to say something startling about the public schools, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and a lot of it is almost an insuperable handicap. It's impossible for an informed person to give easy answers to the hard questions besetting the public schools, yet how can hard answers compete in the literary market place with easy ones? One reason why true educational savants are such notably dull writers is simply that they know too much.

The verbal splendor resulting from recent charges that the schools are not teaching reading right, and older charges that they aren't teaching *anything* right, is undeniably exhilarating. Abraham Lincoln is supposed to have said that a man should preach as though he were fighting bees, and I can't help admiring the way critics of the schools have transferred his advice to their line of endeavor. We haven't heard much lately about the evils of Progressive Education—in fact, the very phrase has acquired a nostalgic ring—but there are still a few people around who seem convinced that the public schools are promoting socialism of some kind, or worse. The schools have been called Godless, and their administrators have been widely described as just plain cotton-headed. A good argument can be started almost anywhere over the question of whether there should be federal aid to education. Businessmen voice pathetic complaints that the high-school graduates they hire as secretaries just can't spell, and college professors snort about the qualifications of entering freshmen. The phrase "crisis in education" has become a cliché, used by some to mean that the schools are incredibly inept, and by others to mean that they are woefully short of money. A visitor to this country would almost inevit-

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Sloan Wilson is a best-selling novelist and executive of the White House Conference on Education.

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ably deduce from the headlines that things have never been so tough. As a rather bewildered friend of mine said recently at a PTA meeting, what's going on around here anyway?

### Something for nothing

I have an uneasy answer. In the last fifty years, and especially in the last ten years, our nation has gone humanitarian to a great and wonderful degree, but it doesn't yet want to pay for it. The schools have never been anywhere near as good as they are today, but the gap between what they are and what the people want is greater than ever before. Nobody really wants to provide the money, time, and thought necessary for closing that gap—the hope is that it can just be argued away. Most of the controversy over public education stems from a strong desire to get something for nothing.

To understand the truth of this, it is necessary to have a clear, unsentimental picture of the way the schools were in the past. The idea that we once had marvelous public schools in this nation, and that modern philosophies of education have ruined them, is the most obvious kind of nonsense. As a matter of fact, no nation through all history has ever had good public schools for all its people, or seriously tried to. Really good education for every child is a startling new concept, one of which the United States can be justifiably proud.

Anyone who doesn't believe this should go to the trouble of consulting records to find just what kind of public schools existed in his own town fifty years ago. What most people would discover is that fifty years ago, city schools were dull

and dingy buildings, with classes of forty or more pupils common. Country schools were usually one-room affairs, with children of widely varying age and ability taught at the same time. Few of the teachers fifty years ago had anywhere near as much education of any kind as most teachers today. The elementary school curriculum was pretty much limited to the Three Rs, and the high schools confined themselves to a college-preparatory program. As someone has said, the subjects were optional: the pupil could take them or stay home. The vast majority of the students never went to high school.

Admittedly, there was a certain clarity about the school situation fifty years ago that is lacking today. Most high-school graduates could spell quite well, because it was usual for only brilliant students to go to high school at all. There were no remedial reading classes, because those who couldn't read were simply dropped. It was also undeniably true that the great majority of all American children got very little education of any kind. Apparently, people didn't care about that much fifty years ago—there was far less talk about an educational crisis then than there is today. Throughout all history most people of the world had got very little education, so why get excited about it? Of course the public schools were threadbare, and the classes crowded, and the teachers little educated, but they were, after all, charity schools, and it was pretty good to have any free schools at all. Most people who could afford it sent their children to private schools as a matter of course, and they supplemented straight classical programs of education with tutors: the dancing master, the music teacher, the tennis in-

structor, and all the rest of them. The children of working men got their vocational education by dropping out of school early and becoming apprentices, and no one brooded about their lack of general education. There was no crisis—most people saw nothing whatsoever to worry about.

### The quiet revolution

The extraordinary thing is that the revolution against this age-old concept has been so quiet, and so invisible that many people today aren't aware that it took place. It all happened very simply. Every year more and more pupils sought admittance to the high schools. A high-school education was part of the American dream, and people in those days dreamed hard and fruitfully. High schools which dropped too many pupils began to get a bad reputation. Public schools are, after all, managed by politically selected school boards, and are designedly sensitive to public pressure. The theories of professional educators did not instigate the great change in public education—it was the demand of the public, insistently voiced through every school board in the land. And what the public wanted was perfectly clear: a high-school education for every American child.

But all children aren't capable of a straight classical program, plenty of educators objected. Well all right, the answer came: most children are capable of acquiring *some* education, aren't they? Give each child as much as you can. Don't kick them out of school. It's a disgrace to be kicked out of school, and schools shouldn't be in the business of disgracing children. Just keep all the children, and give them as much as possible.

No one voice, no one proclamation, gave this answer. It was worked out gradually by thousands of day-to-day decisions at countless schoolboard meetings throughout the country. Professional educators tried to find a way to obey the command. They devised new programs for those who were unable or unwilling to take the college-preparatory work. The sound of the hammer was heard in the land as courses in manual training and mechanics proliferated. For the girls there were "domestic arts," a new phrase for cooking, sewing, and other housewifely chores. And of course, the traditional subjects were still taught—they were taught to more people than ever before. The educators did their best to provide something useful for the slow without handicapping the gifted.

As school enrollments increased, the demand of the public proved insatiable. At school-board meetings, wistful parents kept showing up to ask for something new. Why not courses in dancing and music and tennis—it didn't seem fair that the children of the poor should be entirely cut off from such things. Shrewd managers of factories appeared to ask that vocational education be tailored to meet their immediate employment needs. People worried about safety asked why courses in driving automobiles couldn't be instituted to help cut down the terrible death toll on highways. Others requested courses in family life to help reduce the divorce rate, and instruction about alcoholic beverages to help reduce alcoholism. The schools were asked to encourage good citizenship, patriotism, and international understanding. And how about moral and spiritual values? Sure, the schools can't teach sectarian religion, but moral and spiritual



values can't be entirely left out, can they?

Everybody wanted to add something, and nobody wanted to cut anything out. Certainly no one has ever suggested that the Three Rs are less important than they ever were—in fact, shrill proofs have been offered that in this highly technical age, they are *more* important, and the schools should emphasize them more. More of everything has been the cry—more and yet more!

Well, we'll try, the educators said. Educators I've met are a remarkably cheerful and resilient crowd. They had to say they'd try, for school administrators are paid to carry out the educational programs voted for by school-board members. They didn't, of course, always succeed. All kinds of new problems loomed before them.

Say that a town which fifty years ago had a hundred high-school pupils now has a thousand—that's a conservative amount of growth in this nation. How do you find which of those thousand pupils are capable of college-preparatory work, and how do you give it to them without splitting them off from all the others and creating a socially dangerous kind of elite group within each school system? How do you teach a hundred subjects as efficiently as you once taught a dozen?

The answers usually involved requests for more money. The public was demanding more of the schools, and inevitably, the schools had to demand more of the public. Here, of course, the controversy began, for the people who asked new courses were under the impression that public education is free. What do you mean, it costs money? What's getting into the schools, anyway? They're spending more and more every year, they're going hog wild! Taxes are

going up. Somebody must be getting something out of this. It's socialism, that's what it is. The two great American ideals of good universal education and low taxation collided with a bang—or more accurately, with a long series of bangs which continues to deafen our ears today.

The people also found that the addition of millions of new high-school students and hundreds of new courses had somehow changed things. Bewildered complaints about the schools mounted. A high-school diploma didn't mean what is used to—it meant simply that the schools had done all they could for the recipient during the prescribed number of years. That, after all, was what the public had asked, wasn't it?

Yes, but the able children are getting as good an education as they ever did, and millions more of them are getting an opportunity for it, the educators said soothingly. But was it true? Sometimes not. The intent of neither the public nor the educators had changed, but immediate realities sometimes forced the dilution of college-preparatory courses. It takes a lot of money to run a topnotch college-preparatory program in the midst of all the other duties the schools have been called upon to perform. In some schools—indeed, in many schools—children who wish to prepare for college are a real minority group. All kinds of unpredictable things happen. Recently a great many Negroes moved to a large Midwestern city from a rural part of the South where the Negro children had had woefully inadequate schools. The schools in the Midwestern city had to help the Negro children to make up for years of poor preparation, and there was no special appropriation to meet the emergency.



No one should be much surprised to find that for a while, the general level of education offered by those schools sank.

### Ninety times more pupils

What's the matter with public education, people want to know. And at the same time they say, too many American children have bad teeth. Can't the schools provide free dental inspection, and free dental care for those who can't afford treatment? Sure, that's public health, not public education, but few towns have public-health agencies capable of providing free dental inspection or care for so many children. It would be cheaper to do it through the schools than to create special agencies. After all, we can't let the children's teeth rot, can we? Look at the great number of young men rejected by the draft boards during the last war because they had poor teeth.

What it all amounts to is that the American people rather suddenly subscribed to the ideal of public schools which will do all they possibly can to help each child become as healthy, wealthy, and wise as native endowments permit. It's perhaps a logical ideal for this country—it tends to set a sort of one-generation limit on class barriers, and it certainly glorifies the holiness of the individual, be he poor or rich. I rather doubt that the public thought of such fancy theories. Somehow it just didn't seem fair to allow a child to go to hell in a basket because his parents wouldn't or couldn't get his teeth examined or because he couldn't learn French. There must be some good in every child, the feeling was—let's do what we can to develop it. So the decision was made, without any real recognition of the fact that something new

was being conceived. Having set the goal, the people have apparently forgotten that enormous effort and expense are needed to reach it. They seem to expect the great change in the schools to take place smoothly, without any bother or confusion at all, and certainly without more expense.

In spite of that, an extraordinary amount of progress has been made. In the past seventy-five years or so, high-school enrollments have been multiplied by about ninety. More education is being passed on to more children than ever before in history, as well as more health care, entertainment, and all the rest of it. The advance is perfectly measurable: the average scholastic attainments of soldiers in World War II were tested and found to be much higher than those of the soldiers in World War I. Most suburban schools in America are incredibly good, compared to any sort of school in the past. Many centralized rural schools give the children of farmers an education as good as anyone in the nation can get. The people seem to vacillate between complacency at these gains and exaggerated horror at weaknesses which have not yet been overcome.

There are still plenty of one-room schools where the wood stoves glow with no sign of progress. What is worse, from the point of view of the number of children involved, big city schools have shown perhaps the least improvement of all. In the big cities, those who can afford it still send their children to private schools, and the middle-class people are rushing to the suburbs. The result is that many big-city schools exist almost exclusively for the children of very poor. Those are the children who need the best schools, and all too often, they get the

worst. Not much is being done about their plight.

### Some children can read

The natural vacillation of the public between complacency and outrage is encouraged by books, news stories, and magazine articles. Books like *The Blackboard Jungle* give a picture of the worst big-city schools, and everybody gets into a tizzy. Articles about Utopian suburban schools, protected by the suburb's own brand of economic segregation, calms things down. Then a book charging that the schools are using the wrong method to teach reading whips things up again. Halfway measures are apparently no good in books of this kind—the one I'm thinking of gives the impression of assuming that *no* children are learning to read properly these days. To parents like myself, whose children learned to read beautifully in the public schools, this sort of thing can be confusing, but there is a wonderful authority in the printed word—I sometimes catch myself wondering if my daughters really can read, even while they're contentedly curled up with books which I at their age found incomprehensible. Critics of this kind have one thing in common: they lead the reader to believe that if one relatively inexpensive step were taken, like the use of more phonics to teach reading, everything would be just dandy in the schools.

This is a perfect example of what I mean by an easy answer to a hard question. Here we have slum schools, with miserable buildings, swollen classes, and disturbed children in need of special care. Here we have an increasing birth rate which demands more and more facilities just to

keep the quality of education where it is. Here we have a shortage of teachers resulting from the fact that the birth rate was lowest twenty-five years ago when young teachers were born, and from increasing industrial competition for capable young adults. Here we have more and more demands placed upon the schools every day, and a constantly proliferating list of school duties, with no clear system of priorities governing either the expenditure of money or the pupil's time. And here also we have a book which attracts more public attention than any other book on education recently published, and it appears to give a very simple answer: teach more phonics, and everything will be all right.

Maybe there is an easy answer, after all—easy to say, if not easy to do. Maybe everything would be all right if the public just realized the nobility of the goal it has set for the schools, and also realized the enormous amount of money, time, and thought needed to achieve it. Maybe everything would be all right if everyone realized that the goal of schools capable of wasting no human talent is eminently worth pursuing, and that a nation with the economic power of this one could for the first time in history achieve it.

The common realization of those things would be the first step. The second step would be for thoughtful people in every state and community to sit down and examine the facts about their schools, hear all relevant opinions, and chart their own course. Programs like that of the National Citizens Commission for the Public Schools and the White House Conference on Education have been designed to en-

courage that process. The business of getting together to look at facts isn't very dramatic, and often it's downright dull, but it probably is the only way the bright dream of good schools for everyone can be made a reality.

The job of figuring out how righteous indignation about weaknesses of the schools can be converted into constructive action will not be done by people who wave their arms while criticizing the schools as though they were fighting bees. It will be done by serious-minded people calmly appraising the schools in their own community. It will be done by people who have learned to be patient of differing points of view, and who know how to en-

large areas of agreement, rather than capitalizing on controversy. Somehow an ancient fallacy will have to be righted. *The schools are no good*, many people are saying nowadays, and they imply, *therefore, do not support them*. I certainly agree that many schools are pretty poor now, as they have been always, and I believe that they therefore should be supported doubly. The job of creating schools capable of developing all the abilities of all American children will never be easy, but without any doubt the American people are in their own curious way plodding toward it. There is certainly hope in the fact that for the past fifty years, they have plodded with the speed of hares.

CARMEN WEARY

## Vocabulary Growth through Creative Writing

Lunch time was over and Miss Blake's third graders were grouped about her for one of their "chat sessions." "I don't know how you feel about it but I thought our lunch at the cafeteria was especially good today," said Miss Blake. "Spaghetti is one of my favorite foods."

Johnny patted his tummy contentedly. "Boy! Did I like that Jello with pineapple and bananas."

"Johnny, I've been thinking about the pineapple in that Jello. I wonder where it came from?"

Alice was quick to answer. "We buy cans of pineapple at the store," then thoughtfully, "but I don't know where it really comes from. I've never seen any pineapples growing around here."

Miss Blake went on, "And the Jello, Alice, where did it come from? What is Jello?"

"Miss Blake, what makes Jello melt when it gets warm? Do pineapples grow on trees? Why don't we grow bananas here? What is spaghetti made of?" The questions began to tumble, one upon the other, as Miss Blake skillfully challenged the natural curiosity of her nine and ten year olds.

"Wouldn't it be interesting to find out how many people and how many countries had a part in preparing our lunch today?" Miss Blake asked.

Mrs. Weary is principal of the Grand Avenue School in the Phoenix (Arizona) Elementary District.

"I know what!" Jean bounced toward the map on the bulletin board. "Let's find all the places on the map where our lunch came from."

"Let's get pictures of food and mark the places on the map where it was raised."

"We could use ribbons to show that."

"Yeah—but we'll have to find out where the food came from first." This from practical-minded David.

The responses were quick to come.

"I can find out about spaghetti in the encyclopedia."

"My brother knows all about pineapples. He saw them growing in Hawaii."

Miss Blake's voice was full of enthusiasm. "Boys and girls, I like your ideas! I believe we're ready to make some plans. Suppose we decide right now how we might find out more about this lunch we had today."

In a few moments the class had set up the first planning chart which grew from the children's questions.

#### *Things We Want to Know*

1. Are pineapples raised in our state?
2. Do bananas grow in the United States?
3. How is spaghetti made?
4. Are many beef cattle raised in our state?
5. Do any of our foods come from Europe?
6. Do we send any food to other countries?

Tommy was first to suggest a way to find some of the answers. Other suggestions followed and chart number two set up plans for class activities.

1. Check out books from the library.
2. Ask Joe's brother to talk to our class.

3. Collect labels from cans and boxes of food.
4. Bring pictures for the bulletin board.
5. See a film about food.
6. Visit a grocery store.

Miss Blake began to fill in the details of what had been only a broad outline of a unit on foods. The boys and girls themselves were beginning to point the way toward a good learning situation.

With plans under way the stage was set for purposeful reading. As Janie put it, "It's fun to read when you are looking for real answers to real questions!"

The boys and girls found themselves surrounded with reading materials suited to their levels of ability. There were maps and folders, encyclopedias and magazines, pictures and dictionaries. Because Miss Blake knew it was important that each child share his experiences with others, there was time for reporting, time for telling, time for showing, and especially, time for writing.

The activities of the unit had been rich with language experiences. The children now had something to draw upon in order to speak effectively. They had something meaningful to write about.

But, reasoned Miss Blake, writing involves much more than that. In order to express ideas effectively in written communication, children need to know how to put words together into sentences. They need to know how to change the forms of words to suit the context that is needed. They need to know how to use the dictionaries and they need to know how to build new words based on elements from known words. In other words, they must have word power.

The skills required for transmitting

ideas to written form are not simple. Basically, they depend upon continuous learning opportunities from which the child may acquire experiences that help him understand his language. But, just as important is the need for a systematic program of word development.

As Miss Blake examined the stories and the reports coming from her boys and girls, she realized that the children were not developing word power as satisfactorily as she had hoped.

She knew it when Alice had written, "It was a nice night. The stars were shining. The sky was pretty." This from Alice, who had said only the day before, "Did you see the sky last night? It was like a velvet curtain sprinkled with handfuls of sparkling diamonds."

David, too, was substituting dull listless words for the colorful, dynamic expressions that tumbled from his lips as he talked. Even Brenda, who consistently made a perfect spelling score on the word tests, was misspelling those same words in her creative writing.

And then—there was Walter, whose only contribution to the literary field to date has been a masterpiece titled, "My Dog." It read, "My dog is named Jack. Jack duz triks. He chasus the nabors cats."

David's down to earth philosophy suddenly pinpointed something that seemed to make sense. Looking up from a smudged and dog-eared paper he flatly stated, "Miss Blake, I'm trying to write a report. I know what I want to say but I don't know how to spell all the words I need and by the time I try to figure them out or wait for you to help me, I forget what I wanted to say in the first place. The ones I want aren't in the spelling

book anyway. I've been looking all over the place for the word irrigation. Boy! Am I disgusted!"

David's diagnosis of his own difficulty gave Miss Blake the clue to weaknesses in her program of written language development. It was he who gave her the idea for a method of helping children develop individual writing vocabularies based on their own needs.

It was early in the day. Miss Blake stepped to the front of the room and said, "Boys and girls, I know you are ready to write stories and reports. You've told me the things you would like to write about. I believe I have a plan that might help you write better stories, and at the same time help you spell many of the words that have been giving you so much trouble.

"I will go to the board and write the letters of the alphabet. I'll leave spaces after each letter. As we think of the reports and stories we want to write, we'll decide which words we will all probably need. We will put these words under the letter with which they begin. Then, they will be in alphabetical order."

Going to her desk, Miss Blake picked up some booklets saying, "I have here some booklets with blank pages. These will be your own dictionaries. We will use two pages for each letter of the alphabet. These you may keep at your desks. As I write the words we need on the board, you may copy the ones you do not know into your own dictionary."

"We could put the words we miss on our papers into our dictionaries too," said Jean.

"Fine idea, Jean." Miss Blake distributed the booklets and moved to the board.



"Suppose we try out the idea this morning. Is there a word you think we might need for our writing today?"

David's hand waved in a big spiral. "Irrigation," he said with a sly grin.

"Yes, David, where shall I put it?"

"Well, it sounds like it begins with an *e*, same as ear, but I couldn't find it in the dictionary."

Thus began the list and the many opportunities for phonetic and structural analysis of the words needed.

In a few minutes the list contained words that would be used in the thank you note for Joe's brother, the stories, articles, and poems for the school newspaper, the captions for the bulletin board display on foods, and the letter that would invite parents to visit the school on Friday afternoon.

<i>A a</i>	<i>H h</i>	<i>R r</i>
Arizona	Hawaii	<i>S s</i>
attend	<i>I i</i>	South
<i>B b</i>	irrigation	America
bananas	India	saw
brilliant	<i>J j</i>	<i>T t</i>
balanced	<i>K k</i>	those
<i>C c</i>	known	these
countries	<i>L l</i>	<i>U u</i>
<i>D d</i>	<i>M m</i>	<i>V v</i>
display	<i>N n</i>	<i>W w</i>
<i>E e</i>	<i>O o</i>	wasn't
export	ocean	weren't
Europe	<i>P p</i>	what
<i>F f</i>	produced	was
finest	program	<i>X x</i>
<i>G g</i>	pineapple	<i>Y y</i>
gelatin	<i>Q q</i>	<i>Z z</i>

"Miss Blake, put down *was* and *saw*.

I keep getting them mixed up."

The service words did go down—those difficult to remember words. As Janie put it, "I can remember elephant because I've seen an elephant, but I never did see a was."

As the week went by, more words were added to the alphabetized list and transferred to the individual dictionaries. The children discovered that the dictionaries were easier to use when they were tied to the desks with a length of string.

The children's writing showed almost immediate improvement, but Miss Blake knew this was only half the answer.

Unless the children gain skill in building new words and unless they experience continuous vocabulary growth, they will not profit sufficiently from this or any other type of word development program, reasoned Miss Blake.

Thus began the second phase in the program.

From the alphabetized list, certain words were chosen by Miss Blake and her pupils to be added to a basic word list. A basic speller served as an added source of words the children would need.

At a time separate from the creative writing period, these words were carefully analyzed. The word farm, for example, became a foundation word for farmer, farmhand, harm, harmful, army, armor and alarm. By building new words based on known elements of familiar words, the children were provided with the opportunity to gain independence in word building skills.

Quite to Miss Blake's surprise, Jimmy described the pattern for word study when he remarked one day, "Do you know what we are doing with our words? We hold



them up and look at them. We listen to them. We take them apart and stretch them out and then we put them back together again and practice on them until they belong to us."

"But how do you know when a word belongs to you, Jimmy?" Miss Blake asked.

"Well, I know it almost belongs to me when I get it right in a test, but I'm sure it is mine for good when I pull it right out of my mind and use it in one of my stories."

A soft breeze, heavy with the fragrance of spring blossoms, fluttered the papers on Miss Blake's desk, then playfully caught them up and tossed them into the air. Scattered about on the floor were the stories and articles for the next issue of the weekly newspaper.

Miss Blake smiled as she reached for Alice's paper. "Springtime came floating in on the south wind last night. I felt it brush past my face. I heard it whisper secrets to the blossoms on the cherry tree outside my window."

Alice was beginning to find ways to let her creative thoughts flow into written expression.

David's editorial was of a practical nature, but even he had indulged in a bit of whimsy as he wrote an editorial.

"The Elm Beetle is at work. We noticed that the leaves are curled and brown on the trees along Main Street. Please spray your trees. Our town would look mighty forlorn without the Elm trees and I guess the Mocking Birds would pack up and leave the city."

Diane's paper was marked, Second Installment of the Golden Key. She had decided that her story would be a contin-

uous one and as usual the last line held all the suspense of a soap opera.

"Janet turned the key ever so slowly. Squeak, creak, snap—up popped the lid and out popped a little old squeaged up man who screamed, 'Run for your lives, the Zigwomp is loose.' To be continued."

Leaning back in her chair, Miss Blake was suddenly filled with a sense of satisfaction. The boys and girls had come a long way. The stilted, dismal attempts at writing were gradually being replaced by meaningful communication, but more important perhaps than that, the children were enjoying their creative writing. Fewer and fewer spelling errors were appearing, yet the children's vocabularies were increasing rapidly.

Reaching for a pencil Miss Blake began to jot down some notes. The principal had asked her to speak at the next teacher's meeting. "Tell us," he had said, "how you are able to inspire your pupils to write these stories we've been reading in your newspaper."

It's quite simple really, thought Miss Blake as she began outlining a plan for her talk. Children will write:

- if they have ideas worthy of expression;
- if they have enough basic words to make the attempt worth while;
- if they have adequate skills to build some of the new words they need;
- if they have the knowledge of how and where to look for unknown words;
- if they have the freedom to choose and use the colorful words that satisfy the inner self.

"We'd like to know about your method of teaching spelling too," the principal had said.

"It is really all one and the same," Miss Blake had explained. "Word power is developed through writing. Spelling skills can not be acquired apart from the language skills any more than word study can be meaningful apart from context."

"Well, what about this word study," the principal had asked. "Is there a place for word drills and spelling tests?"

Miss Blake penciled more notes as she recalled her answer.

Practice definitely has its place once word understanding and word meaning has been established. A time needs to be set aside for word study and word practice. A basic vocabulary list carefully selected from the words children need and use forms the core for this study. A spelling book is an excellent source to draw from but imagine how many spelling books would be needed in order to provide all of the words children need and use.

Drill becomes deadly only when children are required to work on long lists of words that are foreign to their needs and their interests.

"Mention testing too," the principal had suggested.

"Oh yes, we have spelling tests—matter of fact, the children look forward to them as a period of self-evaluation. Often the class breaks into partner teams to practice words and test each other on the words in their individual dictionaries."

Miss Blake finished her notes and was about to leave when she heard a soft tap at the door.

"Why Walter, I thought you had gone

home. Why are you so late?"

Walter only smiled and drew a paper from his pocket.

"I wrote a poem for the paper, Miss Blake. Just got it done. Want to hear it?"

Miss Blake's eyes were soft with understanding. This was Walter, who had turned white with fear the first time he was called upon to speak. Here was the boy who had only stared at his shoes the first day of school when he was asked to write his name and address, and who pretended he couldn't see the first time he was handed a reading book. This was Walter whose eyes spoke of a hunger even greater than the hunger he had often known from lack of food.

"Of course I want to hear it, Walter. Please read it to me."

Noisily clearing his throat, Walter threw back his shoulders and in dramatic tones read the verse he had painstakingly printed on the page now slightly crumpled to fit the contour of his rear Levi pocket.

"Little Black Statue

Up on the hill,

Why do you stand

So very still?

You never walk and talk like me,

You just stand there

Like a tree."

"Walter, I'm so proud of you. This is a splendid poem. Tell me, how did you do it?"

Walter's freckled face broke into a mischievous grin. "Oh, I just pulled it out of my mind 'n put it down on paper!"

## The Curriculum and Dr. Einstein

When Albert Einstein died on April 18th the children in my fifth grade class felt that they had lost a personal friend. It all started one day in February when, quite by accident, they had come to grips with the third dimension, depth. My discovering that the children believed that a *cube* was a *square* resulted in an unforgettable learning experience.

I would have been content with the explanation I made which did much to correct the misconception. One of the more interested pupils, however, connected this new-found knowledge to 3-D films. During the discussion that followed, Walter Tyler, aged 10 (the most science-minded of the students), observed that there was also a fourth dimension called "time or something" and although he wasn't exactly sure he could explain it, he knew that Dr. Albert Einstein was "working on a formula" with it. I wrote Dr. Albert Einstein's name on the blackboard and, at the same time, suggested that Walter consult the encyclopedia to see what he could find of interest about the famous scientist. Shortly thereafter, he reported to the class.

Somehow the disclosures concerning the "Theory of Relativity" and "atomic energy" were not as important to the other pupils as was Albert Einstein's date of birth. The biographic sketch clearly indicated that the Princeton professor would soon celebrate his birthday and the children in their anxiety to gain a better understanding of the great man, focused their attention on Albert Einstein, the

person. "Wouldn't it be nice," observed Sandra, "if we sent him a 'Happy Birthday' note?"

That was all it really needed to get the experience under way.

Soon the air became electric and it was decided that the language arts' friendly letter could be written to Dr. Albert Einstein as a birthday note. Subtraction proved that the eminent scientist would be 76 years old on March 14, 1955. Discussion on *form* and *content* of the letter dictated three paragraphs—one, introducing ourselves and the others, the purpose for writing.

Three days later, the papers were collected and a number of samples were read aloud. With this part concluded, Sally rose to speak; she appeared troubled. "You know," she began, "Dr. Einstein is a pretty busy man. Wouldn't it be better, Mr. Zaner, if the whole class wrote him just one letter?" The class agreed and immediately suggested that Patricia Donato be given this task to do because "she has the best handwriting in the class." I offered to chalk the letter on the board, giving the children an opportunity to volunteer sentences that they had used in the writing of their separate notes. I think it important to add here that the children were most anxious to send a small gift along with the message because "a birthday isn't a birthday without a gift"; I offered to buy it but they wanted to chip in. I permitted

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Mr. Zaner teaches in the Farmingdale elementary school system.

them to on the basis that individual contributions be limited to seven cents. There was no obligation to contribute and no record kept. It worked beautifully. After discussion on what the gift should be, I purchased a tie-clasp and cuff-link set with a cursive *E* on them; I showed the set to the class and prepared it for mailing.

The following is a copy of the letter we sent:—

Farmingdale Elementary School  
Main Street  
Farmingdale, New York  
March 10, 1955

Dear Dr. Einstein,

We are all students in the 5th grade. Our teacher's name is Mr. Zaner. One of our subjects is science. You may want to know that there are 35 children in our class.

While discussing formulas, your name came up. Among other things, our teacher told us that you are a famous scientist. We also learned that you have done much work in the field of atomic energy.

We found in our encyclopedia that you will celebrate your 76th birthday on March 14th. Therefore, we want to take this opportunity to wish you many happy returns of the day. We are sending you a small token of appreciation for the wonderful discoveries you have made. Possibly, you could let us know if you like it?

Happy birthday again.

Sincerely,

Mr. Zaner and class.

On March 28th, we received the following answer from Dr. Einstein\*:—  
(Engraved-  
not printed)

\*reproduced as written.

A. EINSTEIN,  
112, MERCER STREET  
PRINCETON,  
NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.  
March 26, 1955

(Typed)

To the 5th Grade  
Farmingdale Elementary School  
Farmingdale N. Y.

Dear Children,

I thank you all for the birthday gift you kindly sent me and for your letter of congratulation. Your gift will be an appropriate suggestion to be a little more elegant in the future than hitherto. Because neckties and cuffs exist for me only as remote memories.

With kind wishes and regards,  
yours sincerely,

(Signature)

Albert Einstein

(Typed)

The thrill of having received this letter cannot accurately be described here. We shared our good fortune with fellow students and faculty—we had written to Dr. Albert Einstein and we had received an answer. This was "learning by doing." I copied the letter on the blackboard and gave the children an opportunity to do the same in their books. We parted for spring recess and the project was considered completed.

Monday, April 18th was the date fixed to resume classes. Monday, April 18th was also the date death came to Dr. Albert Einstein. *How* to tell the children became the major task. I thank Dr. Jonas Salk for aiding me in the solution to this problem.

I began on that Monday by asking the children if they knew of the two important

happenings that had occurred during the vacation period. It didn't take long to get the Salk anti-polio vaccine and death of Albert Einstein out. Because children more readily understand the living, I seized upon the occasion to discuss the monumental step forward the discovery of the Salk vaccine was responsible for—delving somewhat into diseases and stressing methods employed to combat them; *toxins*, *anti-toxins*, *the nature of vaccine*, *immunity* and the like. In short, this became a lesson devoted to pointing up methods of securing better health in our own lifetime.

When the passing of Dr. Albert Einstein and the deep "personal" loss resulting from our contact with him came up for discussion, I pointed out that nature provides this system of balance—something gained, as in the fight against infantile paralysis and something lost, as in the death of our great scientist-friend. I went on to say that perhaps Dr. Einstein would have liked to have his passing thought of in this way.

Wednesday of that week, The New York Times carried the story of our experience to the public. The Long Island Daily Press gave us a six-column headline—the news was out. As if by design, just prior to the entire incident, we finished a two-week unit of study on newspapers, generally and The New York Times, specifically. Can you imagine the impact on these youngsters when they read of their own experience in the newspapers?

From the teaching standpoint, this was a dream-come-true. In the silence of the waning hours of the day, I thought to myself that the paths of life that solidify

learning situations and help make school experiences more meaningful to children are diverse indeed. Surely, many times real learning results from unhappy events; yet, if teachers strive, they can find other outside-of-school experiences with happier endings to aid educative techniques.

Further, it occurred to me that much of teaching in the elementary grades includes some correlation of subject matter. (I believe this to be true despite the extent to which a school "prides" itself in the traditional method). There is more to be considered than the correlation of subject matter, however. Often, as with the starting point of our experience, a class may be motivated by subject content neither prescribed by the curriculum nor planned by the teacher. In meeting the particular needs of the children, the follow-through could happily result in linked-learning just as ours did. Indeed, I am fortunate in that the school policy and/or philosophy governing my individual situation does not conflict with the integrative processes vital to better education. I trust those less fortunate have not abandoned hope completely.

Heartwarming letters of congratulations have come from Illinois and Massachusetts; there are others. Yet, in a broader sense, "the good (of teachers and teaching) is oft interred with their bones." Recognition of accomplishment is rare though accomplishment is an everyday occurrence. Let this, in itself, be most rewarding.

Finally, I have shared this incident with you because you have shared my strivings.



## Parents As Partners

Shirley looked up as she reached for my hand. "You know," she said, "today is the very best day in all the world!" And small wonder that she felt as she did! Her father had come to school that morning to tell our second grade more about paper, bringing with him, among other things, that small DuPont product which can press out a piece of paper if the proper ingredients are poured into it. And before our eyes we saw a real piece of paper take form and shape. It was a miracle of modern science and people and machinery—all happening in a classroom.

"It's paper! I saw it made myself!"

"Can we write on it?"

"Let's try."

"It's thick isn't it? Why?"

"Can I do it too?"

"It's mine! I made it."

Of course you can do it too. It's yours!

Because it is with experiences like these that children grow and learn and develop in our democratic way of living.

Shirley and all her friends in our second grade at Roosevelt School are involved in learning by living what we believe. Our interest in our parents' work really started with Business-Education-Industry Day and our Mid-Year Conference with the theme, "Understanding Our Economy as Teacher-Citizen." The children were about as excited as I was to learn that my visit to Industry would be a tour of the Michigan Bell Telephone Company. We planned together the things about the telephone which we wanted to know more about. Afterward I gave a full

report trying to answer their questions—sharing the booklets, reading and studying pictures in "The Telephone—How We Use It," each child having his own book to keep—a gift from the Telephone Company.

Someone asked, "Do any of our fathers work there?" No, but Susan's sister did as a part-time operator while going to high school.

"Well, if no one's father works there, where do our fathers work? Can't we find out what they do?"

And so their interest developed. Isn't a child's deep interest always concerned with himself, his family, his pets, his friends, his work? Don't I have a personal stake in what is mine?

"A successful school is interested in the individual needs, abilities, and growth pattern of *each* child." Our principal, Mr. Elwood Griffith, and the teacher believe this, too.

In Social Studies our study of community helpers had included the farmer, the grocer, the postman, the fireman. All of them, in helping us, helped others as well. They are essential to our way of living. And so, too, are our parents. It has not taken us long to realize that their work is vital to our community as well as to us.

"Can't we put these sentences up where we can all see them and read

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Mrs. Borton is a teacher in the Roosevelt School, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

<sup>1</sup>Willard C. Olson and John Lewellen, *How Children Grow and Develop*. Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc. 1953, p. 27.

them?" Each child decided to bring in his own writing about his parent's work. The big chart began to take form. And how eagerly the child read his own sentence as I printed it after his name:

"Our parents do many things to help us and others in our community:"

*Who                      What                      Where*

Joline Bailey's mother gives permanents and cuts hair at home.

Sharon Bennett's father is a dispatcher for the Yellow Cab Company.

Shirley Blett's daddy unloads lumber and windows at the Miller Lumber Company.

Shirley Conant's daddy makes paper at Mill #2 of the Kalamazoo Paper Company.

Everyone's name was there! Everyone's parent was doing something to help, to serve others in the community! And who is to say what job is more important than any other? How could we get along without the paper makers, the hot water heater makers, the printers, the switch board operators, the riveters, the transformer and transmission makers, the housekeepers, the truckers, the shoe salesman, the welders, the soldiers?

And then one day something happened! (Be prepared for the unexpected in this exciting opportunity of helping children grow and learn!) Susan McLain's daddy's picture appeared in a Consumers Power Magazine. Naturally Susan brought it to show. My father! Here in print! And up on the bulletin board it went for all to see. His switchboard kept the electrical power coming to us for our lights, our bells, our refrigerators, stoves, our oil-burners. And there Mr. McLain was standing by it!

"Is that what a switchboard looks like?"

"Looks like the telephone one, only bigger."

Pictures were compared. And then one day soon after that Carol Hard's mother's picture was in the *Gazette* showing a new chair the Kalamazoo Sled Company is making. The big chart on the wall said "Carol Hard's mother is a riveter at the Kalamazoo Sled Company." We read it again as her picture went up on the bulletin board. Now there were two pictures!

"What is a rivet?"

"Have you ever seen your mother put one in?"

"How does she do it?"

"Can you go there to see?"

Look what interest can do! One afternoon after school Carol's daddy picked her up and took her to the Sled Company. There she saw the rivets going in the chairs and the steering bars on the sleds. Now she could show the rivets to the rest of us. Here were the chair parts! See what the rivets do—they hold the parts together! Touch them; feel them. And here were pictures (what fun it is to have a record of such a rich experience—bless the fathers who enjoy photography as a hobby) of Carol watching her mother at her riveting machine.

"It looks like my mother's sewing machine."

Now we can read the sentence again—with meaning. Our experiences have given us a "deposit of knowledge." "Carol Hard's mother is a riveter at the Kalamazoo Sled Company." Sense the difference! See the smiles. Feel the learning. Joe said, "Here are some rivets on my chair!"

During conferences with parents, other mothers and fathers began to think about what they could do to aid in our partnership of educating our children. The

exhibit of materials began to grow. Paper, printed forms, a shoe cut through to show its making, paper products, a piece of red wood—Larry says it came from a "*huge* tree—a real big tree." I can hear someone now say that second graders don't know words like that. Well, I can only say that how do we know they don't? Let's give them the chance to share with us what they know! Let us see a picture of a huge redwood tree. Let us touch a piece of the wood and smell the good, great forest it came from as we feel it. There were chair parts, sled parts, a sill cock (see how it turns the water on and off! Feel it. Turn it. Where is there one at your house?) Booklets are there too. A household deodorant. We sprayed it in the room after our school carnival. It took away all the pop-corn smells. A copper cleaner, postage-stamp paper, parcel post forms.

The stories that began with a single sentence on the chart have grown too. Some are still unsigned because the children feel they want to add more about their parents' work as they learn new things. Each story has been developed in the child's own writing and language but with expert consultant help.

"I had to talk to daddy about this."

"My father says this stock is gray and dirty because it has some printing in it yet."

Larry's daddy told him more about the new trucks the Post Office has for delivering mail. Ever since our stories have been started so short a time ago, modern science and machinery have been making improvements. We admit it is hard to try to keep up-to-date on what is happening here in our own community. It is inevitable that progress will catch up

with us if we let it!

While the stories are growing, plans are being made to print them in booklets so that each child will have his own copy to present to his parents. One parent remarked at the conference that he would like to see the stories printed in a book. Through teamwork (administrators are wonderful in the help they can give us just when it is most needed) high school students may do the typing and duplicating of the printed pages. Every child will have a story. If you could hear the earnest suggestions given as each story is read, you would know that each child wants the story he is writing about his parent to be his best work.

"It's going to be in a book with my name on it!"

And the pictures! You wouldn't believe what can happen. We put the bulletin board with the pictures on it right where parents coming for conferences will see it. The minute one parent saw Carol watching her mother put in the rivets—he had ideas about his child too, and a camera to record the learning! So many pictures are coming in, real pictures of real people! "Here I am watching my dad. It's just like being in the movies!" Larry is looking into a parcel post truck while his father is telling about the packages. Donald is looking at the printing press as his dad works. Howard's daddy is a soldier—an engineer. Here he is building a bridge somewhere in Germany. Howard hasn't seen him for three years but he is coming home this fall. Won't he be proud of Howard and of the story he'll read about himself in our book?

Shirley is at the paper mill watching the great rollers her daddy operates press

the water out of the great wet sheets of paper. Did you know that a mill uses ten gallons of water in the making of just one pound of paper? We know that now. Shirley's father told us. And Shirley saw it happen! (Have you seen 40 quarts of water beside one pound of paper?) "You can see the steam here in this picture! And here I am and here is Daddy!"

"Join the school and see the world."<sup>2</sup> And learn about it too. Dr. Hymes calls bringing people into the classroom the "first cousin of the field trip." I think that is an understatement. From our experiences this year, I would say that parents who have come into our room to share their knowledge are the "people of the year."

Realizing that it is often not feasible to take a group of seven-year-olds into some factories and places of business because of safety regulations, we have been amazed at what can be done when a parent and teacher and employer work together to show children the miracles of our machine age. Shirley's father, at our suggestion, consulted with the superintendent of his mill and arrangements were completed for Shirley and her teacher to visit the Mill. Here again, what a blessing that photography is a hobby! The cameras went with us that memorable evening. For two hours we saw, heard, felt, and smelled as we walked and watched. We followed from the beginning the making of a great roll of postage stamp paper. Have you seen? Do you know? Surely there is never a substitute for first hand experience. Go and see for yourself. Look, Listen, and

Learn! We used two cameras, as we have on all such experiences, to bring back two sets of pictures. The black and white enlargements are a constant reminder of what people and machines can do for us. To the bulletin boards we take our chairs any time we want to sit down and learn again, and remember. "Just let me look at this." There is the big mixer." "Here I am! See the rollers?" The colored slides are a record too. When Shirley's father came to school to make paper for us, as he talked we showed the slides we had made. Here is a way to keep that rich experience as a "deposit of knowledge." "Let's see them again!"

The mill superintendent sent the teacher a beautiful book, a 1955 publication, *The Paper Maker*. Always be prepared for surprises.

When the children were making pictures of the different machines we saw at the paper mill, Sharon said, "I'm going to put myself in this picture. I feel like I've been there." (Learning is emotional as well as intellectual).

Muriel's father came to school one day to tell us more about shoes. Did you know it takes about 105 little jobs to complete the making of a pair of shoes and that all these operations take about six weeks of time? And did you know that when you stand your shoe needs to be half a size larger? We know; we saw; we felt.

Linda's father dropped in one morning about eleven o'clock. Our hostess had shown him to a chair and Linda introduced him. He joined our circle, literally. The things we didn't know about hot water heaters!

Other parents are planning to come to our class too. Larry's father, our postman,

<sup>2</sup>James L. Hymes, Jr., *A Child Development Point of View*. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955, p. 121.

is working out an exhibit and talk with our postmaster who hopes to join us. Our second grade is too young to visit the Post Office, but the postman can come to us to help us learn more.

One mother, who is a nurse, will come to talk about good health and safety and the friendliness of hospitals. Won't it be easier for a child to enter a hospital perhaps to have his tonsils out if he has met a nurse for the first time in a classroom in her white uniform and wearing a friendly face as Susan's mother?

The daddy who drives for the lumber company is waiting for a load that would be most interesting to Larry and his friends. Then he will drive by the school, parking in a safe place, and will take a few minutes to meet us and answer questions.

Shirley's father came to school to vote but stayed to help us learn more about paper. Michael's dad, the plumber, wants to bring his tools to school and show the children how some of them work for us.

For every visit the children plan what they want to know about. Their record of "things we have learned more about" will make a fascinating review when re-read. A mural is being painted showing the parents at their work—the children's own drawings and paintings—their ideas of how each parent looks as he does his job.

Because we believe in getting to know ourselves, the children, their parents, people in the community, all good friends, even better, we will have a potluck supper for the families in our room in May. Our mothers are enthusiastically planning for the food. The children are planning the program with the aid of an opaque pro-

jector to show the pictures of each child with his parent at work (wherever it has been possible to record such an experience). We will play the tape recording of each child reading the story he has written about a very important person—his own father or mother.

Each child will introduce his own parents and family to his friends. As authors, each child will present a copy of "Our Parents Work" to his family. Won't it be fun to find the most important story in the book and read it again? Won't it be fun to show the exhibit in our room? Wouldn't you come to school with your child to hear him read, to see his work and to meet his friends? Sharon said, "We understand about things better when we do them together."

We know that a "child can respond at no level but his own."<sup>3</sup>

Look what can happen after a B.E.I. day visit, when we start with our children right where they are, and join the team! The implications are tremendous. "Our parents do many things to help us and others in our community." That was the beginning. Our discoveries have been many. The learning "deposits of knowledge" go on—never ending—like waves when a pebble is dropped into water. The money parents earn is spent for things and services the family needs. "If there is some extra money we can buy some things we just want." Money we spend makes work for other people. To second graders the study of economics is simple.

<sup>3</sup>Association for Childhood Education International, *Continuous Learning*, Washington D.C., A.C.E., 1951, p. 19.



HAZEL S. RENCH  
AND  
FRANCES M. MORONEY

## A Challenge: I Can't Read

"You know I can't read!" This statement came emphatically from Bob on the first day of September. Such a remark did not startle Miss Moroney for she usually had at least one retarded reader in her fifth grade at the beginning of the year. Looking at Bob she saw the same defiance in every feature of his handsome, sullen face and in every line of his well-built body that said, without words, "Teach me. I dare you to!" He shrugged off her welcoming smile and brushed past her to a seat as far away as possible from the chatting groups of fifth graders.

In the next few days, Miss Moroney's first move was to find out something about Bob's background. A conference with his mother revealed that he had transferred from a nearby school mainly because the children made fun of his lack of reading ability. He was a child of older parents with six married brothers and sisters who had children of their own. His mother's over-protection made Bob rebel against family rules and regulations and most other human contacts. His meager records had no reading test score, and any attempt to find his reading level by a standardized test failed because of his lack of cooperation. However, a Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, administered by a specialist, showed that he had average intelligence and should be able to master the necessary reading skills. His health record was perfect.

With this information, Miss Moroney planned her approach to another reading

problem. She knew that she must find his interests, gain his trust, improve his social relations with the group, and build up his self-confidence in order to teach him to read.

During the beginning weeks of school, Bob proved to be an interesting contradiction. Miss Moroney's first step was to help him find a friend. That friend turned out to be Joel, a happy boy, already popular with this group of fifth graders. Fortunately, the boys liked each other almost immediately. Joel proved an able ally because it was through him that she heard about Bob's tame pigeons at home. By her own observations she had discovered Bob's interests in sports and all mechanical gadgets. Now his love of animals should provide an entering wedge to reading.

He accepted the daily school activities indifferently except when the discussion touched upon one of his special interests. There was one exception to this indifference—he loved to listen to stories—any kind—and he was always the first to be ready for story time and the last to want it to come to an end. These bits of information kindled Miss Moroney's hopes even though his response to any effort to teach him reading was always the same, "I can't read, I told you." or "I'll read only two pages." or "I'm tired now, I don't want to read any more."

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Miss Rench is Associate Professor of Education and Miss Moroney is Assistant Professor and supervising fifth grade teacher in the Campus School at State University of New York at Brockport.

Her efforts were rewarded one day when Bob asked if he might bring his pet pigeons to class. This necessitated a temporary cage and offered Bob the opportunity of visiting the maintenance room where he found another friend in the janitor. The day the pigeons arrived Bob proudly displayed his pets, answered questions asked by the group, and for a time was the star of the fifth grade. But, as always, with these inquisitive fact finders, there were questions Bob could not answer. One interested questioner came to the rescue with, "I'll look it up, Bob; I'll help you." The two boys were off to the library where, with the help of the librarian, they searched books to find the missing information. Urged on by common interest they gathered their facts, organized them, and returned to share their findings with the rest of the class. For the first time this year Bob was beginning to see a personal need for reading skills.

Additional help came from an unexpected source. The first graders who were studying about pets invited Bob to bring his pigeons to their room. This opportunity to do a job he liked, alone, brought to light hidden talents. Bob showed amazing poise before this younger group, gave an interesting, well-organized talk, and demonstrated his innate love for animals in the manner in which he handled his pets.

After this episode he was willing to accept the books Miss Moroney suggested. These were books of high interest for readers with a limited recognition vocabulary ranging in difficulty from primer to third grade reading level. Among these were:

#### *THE COWBOY SAM SERIES*

Cowboy Sam  
Cowboy Sam and Porky  
Cowboy Sam and Freddy  
Cowboy Sam and Shorty  
Cowboy Sam and the Rodeo  
Cowboy Sam and the Fair  
Cowboy Sam and the Rustlers  
Cowboy Sam and the Indians

#### *THE BLAZE SERIES*

Blaze and the Gypsies  
Billy and Blaze  
Blaze Finds the Trail  
Blaze and the Forest Fire

#### *THE CORE-VOCABULARY READERS*

The Ranch Book  
Rusty Wants a Dog  
Smoky the Crow

#### *THE AIR AGE READERS* and some of *THE FIRST BOOK SERIES* by Watts.

Miss Moroney felt that now she could begin a carefully planned reading program to build the necessary reading vocabulary. Words were selected from his reading, brush-penned on slips of paper, studied, and kept in a shoe box. This list grew as each evening Bob studied the newspaper and circled such words as 'by', 'good', 'it' etc. The Dolch list of 220 basic sight words were mastered in this way.

Miss Moroney observed that Bob had one chronic reversal. When he did writing, he made b's for d's. Also his left-to-right eye movements consisted of many jerks and repetitions, and he pointed to every word as he labored slowly along each line. But as Bob mastered sight words he gained interest. He willingly started his personal dictionary and worked industriously in a phonics workbook at primer level.

The BLAZE books followed the COWBOY SAM books. During his first hour with COWBOY SAM how surprised he was to discover that he had read, not one chapter (stories to him) but three. "I didn't know I had read so many pages,"

was his amazed comment. What a different attitude from September when he was saying, "I don't want to read—I'll do only two pages."

As the year progressed, Bob entered into the activities of the class. At one point a tape recording of his oral reading from *BILLY AND BLAZE* was made. When Bob read his paragraph, he stumbled over the word, 'seemed'. In the play-back, he supplied the missing word instantly, from memory. Miss Moroney noted Bob's immediate interest in the mechanical operation of the recorder. After one explanation he could use it. From that time on Bob became the operator as various tape recordings were made of reading activities and reports from science and social studies. He responded quickly to anything mechanical and showed others how to operate the recorder and filmstrip projector.

A unit on photography really captured his interest completely. In order to make his pin-hole camera, he had to read and follow directions accurately and make measurements carefully. His camera was the first one finished and ready to take pictures. The directions for making prints from these negatives were given orally. Bob listened intently to the explanations and at the end could repeat every step of the process more clearly than anyone in the class.

Bob arrived early on the morning set for converting the storeroom into a darkroom for printing the negatives. No one worked more enthusiastically than he, as he tied on his rubber apron, put the trays of water and hypo in the proper places, and helped the boys and girls with their printing. Bob had accepted responsibility as well as human companionship.

A week later Bob's mother arrived at school for the purpose of finding out what equipment was needed for this darkroom. Bob was so enthusiastic that he had begged for one at home. In a few days he was in business for himself printing negatives for all his older brothers, sisters, and nephews.

But it wasn't until he started reading *TIM AND THE TOOL CHEST* by Beim that he asked to take a book home. How long Miss Moroney had waited for just such an expression of interest! So at the year's end Bob was beginning to enjoy reading—beginning to want to read.

Miss Moroney had found Bob's interests and given him an opportunity to pursue them; she had helped him to improve his social relations and as a result gained his trust and built up his self-confidence. Because of these things it was possible for her to teach him the skills he needed in order to find some measure of satisfaction in reading. Rebellion against his past failures was not completely overcome. Any attempt to give him a reading test aroused all of his old antagonisms. Miss Moroney wisely concluded that testing was not that important. Since Bob had read about twenty-five books during the year, she felt that she had succeeded in helping him to accept the fact that he could read, that he needed to read for information, and that he could read for fun.

With Bob well on the road to successful reading, it is essential that the program of work started with him be continued. To make sure that no time be lost Miss Moroney took Bob's records, a list of books read by him, and a summary of his individual program to his sixth grade teacher. There she found an understanding sympa-

thetic listener and left the conference confident that Bob would be given the oppor-

tunities and the necessary guidance to grow in his ability to read.

SYLVIA ROSE

## First Grade Children Write

Much has been said and written about having an aim before you teach. I think of it as a "hope." I hope by May each year that many of my first grade children will be able to compose and write simple complete sentences independently. It may seem to some that by the middle of April you can begin a six weeks course of written language and by the last week of school you will have accomplished your aim. I am a slow worker. It takes me eight or nine months to do it. To be able to compose and write simple complete sentences requires a slow gradual buildup of ability based on a background of broad varied experiences. The skeleton frame work from the child's view point might be:

1st—Understanding what is said (The vocabulary they hear must give them clear ideas. Don't confuse them with meaningless words.)

2nd—Ask questions which they can answer in a complete sentence.

3rd—Discuss something they can think and tell about. Get free oral expression before you try written work.

A child must:

Hear it

See it

Read it

Write it

—each succeeding step with understanding and meaning to him. I try to use questions which can be answered with *yes* or *no*. Are your eyes blue? We would have some

*yes* answers and some *no* answers. We use our right hand to tell the answer *yes* and our left hand to tell the answer *no*. When they can read questions which I write on the chalk board; we use our *yes* (right) hand and our *no* (left) hand to answer the questions. I take a large sheet of manila paper, draw around a child's left hand—write *no* under it. On the right side of the paper I draw around another child's right hand and write *yes* under it. This is put up on the tack board for several weeks, or as long as the children need it.

Now they may be ready for some written work. Write questions which can be answered by *yes* or *no*.

CAN YOU SEE DICK? —

The children copy the question and put the answer *yes* or *no* on the line after the question mark. Be sure you have had sufficient oral *yes* and *no* questions before they have to read them from the chalk board. Go into their written composition work gradually. Be sure they are ready before you have them try something too hard for them. Have them succeed in their efforts. Failure is unpleasant. For children who are not learning to write as rapidly as the others, I write out the questions on a sheet of ruled paper for them and expect them to write only one word needed to tell the answer. That is a big accomplishment for

Miss Rose is a first grade teacher in New Lexington, Ohio.

some children. Following *yes* and *no* work we use a sentence which can be completed with one word.

SPOT IS A *DOG*

PUFF IS A *CAT*

Three questions to be written and answered are enough for the average group. Only one question should be given to the lower fourth or third of your class.

While your written language is slowly developing, continue with complete sentences in oral speech in discussion and answers to questions.

For written work you can put one question on the chalk board and let the children write as many answers as they wish to.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

WHAT CAN YOU SEE?

WHERE CAN YOU GO?

Sometimes when a brief complete response is given I'll say, "You could write that—I think you could. Do you want to try here on the chalk board?" (I can help the child if necessary). Other children may decide they can do it also—let some try it using some other sentences. Don't expect the class to do it the next day. Leave time for absorption. When the majority of your group can write an answer, then write a question on the chalk board for them to copy and answer. Be sure they have sufficient words in their "writing" vocabulary to try it and succeed. If you are patient, willing to wait until they are ready for the next step, and you have given them helpful teaching to develop their abilities, you will have great satisfaction in their attainment in writing. Don't introduce too many words or you will confuse them. Don't put too much in, or put it in too fast. Don't try to give them

more than they can hold. Don't put more into a house than it can hold; you may be losing something more valuable through the back door than the new you just put in by the front door. Don't over load beyond the capacity to retain and hold.

Every year situations differ and so do children's interests. Each school year your written language work must meet the needs of your group of children. I wrote two questions to be copied and answered in a complete sentence.

WHERE IS YOUR FATHER?

WHERE IS YOUR MOTHER?

I asked the children to copy the first question, then write the answer to it before they copied the next question. I often tell them, "Always write so you can read what you have written. Write so anyone can read it." I asked them to read the two questions themselves and think what their answers would be. I asked if they would need any words they did not know how to write. There were a few which I put on the board for them. They had to think of the answers in complete sentences. If you word your questions carefully, they will have many of the words needed for their answer in the written question. I had good results from their two questions and answers. All answers were not the same. Two mothers were at work. Some fathers work at night so some fathers were at home.

Later I write questions and underscore the first word.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

This means the child does not copy the question. The answer must tell everything we want to know without the question written above it.

We put two or three words on the



chalk board. The children use them in sentences orally, then write sentences with the words in them. When we have "it" or other pronouns they must write two sentences about the same person or thing. Finally the children can write several sentences about "MY TOY," "MY DOG," "MY DOLL," or other subjects.

We have made lists of words on a page in our tablet to keep and use in our stories. Write as many "animals" as they can, or "toys." They can add to their list as they learn new words.

Last year Donald wrote the days of the week on a page in his tablet from his socks. He referred to this page when he wrote sentences with the word *saw*. It was something like this:

I SAW MY FATHER, SATURDAY  
I SAW MY MOTHER, MONDAY  
I SAW MY DOG, WEDNESDAY  
I SAW SUSIE, FRIDAY

He had written the days of the week several weeks before he used them in his written sentences and he could read them all.

Be willing to go back over steps learned some time ago with new material as their sight vocabulary grows. Have new questions which can be answered with a simple word. Give new sentences to be completed with one word. If you can remember how hard this was weeks ago, or months ago, you will know they have

come a long way toward independent writing. You will know that your time has been well spent. When children are doing independent writing and need a word they do not know how to write, I tell them to leave a space for it. If they can tell how it begins they make the initial letter. I will help them with it later and they can go on with the rest of the sentence.

This language, oral and written is not a separate subject, but a part of our reading, writing, numbers, and subject of interest. It is not isolated, but a part woven in with our other regular work. It is especially beneficial as a part of our reading program.

This story was written voluntarily in April.

#### MY NEW SKATES

I have a pair of roller skates. I have not seen the roller skates. They are at home for me. I will see the roller skates soon. Come and skate with me when I get the skates. I can not wait till I can get home.

(The above was written Friday)  
(Monday she wrote):

Mother had the little skates so we went to the store and we got a big pair of roller skates. I skate and skate and I skate and skate all day.

That is all about my roller skates.

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*Attend the Council convention November 24-26, Hotels Commodore and Roosevelt, New York City.*

## Home School Cooperation For Better Readers

Being firmly convinced that the school ever needs to be alert to the best ways of improving reading instruction and achievement, and that the home has much influence on the prevention or cause of reading failures, also that the home and school need to work together continually, with mutual respect and understanding to help children become good readers, I have conducted a study among classes in my own school system to determine the effect of home influences on reading progress in school, and to find out ways in which the home and school can cooperate to make the best use of those influences.

I gave questionnaires to 119 pupils of five sixth grades in the Kingston school system. The questions were planned to discover the accessibility and use of reading materials in the home and the parent-child relationships in the area of reading. Uniform directions were given to each class. Information gained from the questionnaire was compared to the reading status of each pupil.

The reading status of each pupil was assessed by determining his reading achievement in relation to his mental ability. This was done to equalize as much as possible the influence of the intelligence factor on reading achievement, so that the home influence could be more clearly seen.

The child's learning ability was estimated by using the results of the California Test of Mental Maturity. This test is composed of two sections, one of language and

one of non-language factors. An intelligence quotient for each section and the average of the two are computed for each pupil. For most purposes of estimating the mental maturity of the child, the average IQ is used. However, for my purpose, I used the highest of the three quotients, since I considered this the most truly indicative of the child's ability. Children who read poorly tend to test lower on an intelligence test containing language factors than do good readers, but would not be hampered by this lack in the non-language section. Thus I felt I could determine a more accurate estimate of each child's reading ability in relation to his mental ability.

The child's reading achievement was computed from the total score he made on the Silent Reading Comprehension section of the Iowa Every-Pupil Test of Basic Skills. An age equivalent in reading, coinciding with the total reading score was derived by using the table in the examiner's manual for the reading test. The elementary battery for grades 3-5 was given rather than the advanced battery, as the pupils took the test at the beginning of the sixth grade.

I then found a reading quotient for each child by dividing his "reading age" by his "mental age." His reading age was the

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age equivalent of his reading score from the reading test. His mental age was computed by multiplying his highest IQ from the California Test of Mental Maturity by his chronological age at the time when he took the reading test. I then used the reading quotient as a basis for assessing his reading status as follows:

Reading Quotient	Reading Status
90-100	Good
80-89	Average
Below 80	Poor

By tabulating and comparing the answers from the questionnaire with the child's reading status, I found the following results and implications:

1. Evidently the socio-economic class tends to affect reading achievement. The poorer the social class, the poorer the reading status.

2. In a question concerning the newspapers taken in the home, it was found that most families take a local paper and a tabloid daily. A much smaller percentage take a metropolitan paper. It was of interest to discover that children from families taking both a local paper and a metropolitan paper tend to have a higher reading quotient.

3. In comparing the number of books in the home with the child's reading status, it was found that families having over 100 books in the home have a slightly lower percentage of poor readers than those having fewer books. Pupils having no books of their own tend to be poor readers. Also when encyclopedias are used considerably in the home, fewer poor readers and more good readers result. These results are especially interesting when it is remembered that each child's success in reading was rated in relation to his ability.

4. Practically all the children tested

claimed that they liked to read. Only five of the 119 tested claimed they did not. All of these pupils were boys and all were low average or poor in reading achievement. In no case had the pupil been read to often, and in no case had the pupil been read to by his father. These results would seem to imply that a dislike of reading by boys may be a result of the fact that there has not been a sharing of reading between father and son. It also indicates that there is a strong correlation of a dislike for reading with reading failure but that children of low, average, and high intelligence may dislike reading and have reading difficulties, as the IQs of these boys ranged from 81 to 120.

5. The question concerning the frequency of reading to children in the home had the most significant results. Pupils who were read to almost every day had the largest proportion of good readers and the smallest proportion of poor readers. Since this reading to children was, in almost every case, done in pre-school days, and since the child had to recall experiences that had occurred six years previous to this survey, and considering that the child has been subjected to many other contributing influences during those years, it is of special interest to note the correlation of the frequency of reading to children with their reading success in later years. This seems to prove the great value of consistently reading to children when they are young, not only in the home but in the school.

6. The amount of time the child now spends in recreational reading and the time the parent or other adult in the family, spent in reading to the child in early years showed a definite correlation. A greater

percentage of pupils who were read to consistently are continuing the habit of recreational reading by reading for themselves than are those who were not read to frequently. Few of those who were not read to tend to have the habit of free reading today.

7. Of pupils who were helped at home with reading, only a very small number claimed they disliked this help. However, children who were helped at home tended to be poor readers in relation to their ability, and children not receiving help tended to be good readers. These results imply that attempting to help children read at home does not seem worthwhile.

8. Results showed that children tend to rate their success in reading with others in their grade, rather than in relation to their reading ability. Many had false opinions of their own ability and achievement. The implications here are that both teachers and parents, by making comparisons, may build up false ideas of superiority or inferiority in children. It illustrates the importance of knowing when children are working at capacity, the need for accepting the natural rate of learning for each child without condemning or labeling him, and the reason for individualized instruction. These are especially crucial points that should be used as a basis for parent-teacher understanding and cooperation.

This finding of evidence that the home does influence reading achievement is of significance to parents and teachers and a starting point for planned cooperation of home and school for the best interests of children. The fact that reading to children in the home in early childhood influences reading achievement six or seven years later in spite of many other contributing

factors is worthy of consideration. Reading to children is such a simple matter and so delightful an experience for both reader and listener, if the reader has any reading ability at all and enjoys what he is reading, that it seems a pity that reading to children is not an accepted daily habit in both school and home. It should be added to family habits like reading the evening paper, watching a favorite television show, or swimming, skating, or singing together. Children struggle through the stages of learning to skate, ski, or swim because they see others enjoying it and want to join in the fun. By the same token, children will learn to master reading skills when they see others enjoy it habitually. But treating reading as a chore or punishment defeats the purpose and is probably why so many attempts at teaching reading at home result in failures.

To help children to enjoy and be successful in reading, the home and school must agree as to reading goals and the best experiences for boys and girls. It is the responsibility of teachers to have available authoritative material on the subject of helping children at home, besides being ready with suggestions that have arisen from their own experiences, for parents when they ask what they can do to help children improve their reading. To tell them that they must not help at home or to "stop worrying and everything will turn out all right" is an approach often based on false optimism and fools no one, but tends to build up resentment and bring justified criticism of our schools. This is a decided hindrance to a satisfactory solution of reading problems. Teachers should welcome the interest of parents and direct it to constructive action. Many book com-

panies publish pamphlets that can be secured in quantities to give to parents. They tell ways in which reading progress can be implemented by help at home. *Everybody's Business, Our Children*, by Maurel Applegate, presents suggestions to parent teacher organizations for programs to help with this problem and has plans for parents who wish to help their children at home. *First Adventures in Reading* by May Lamberton Becker suggests ways in which parents may instill a love for reading in their children. *Bequest of Wings*, by Annie Duff, a book as delightful as its title, tells of a family's life and pleasure with books, how they grew together in sharing their fun with them and how they found their way to become better parents because of the use of them. Mary and Lawrence K. Frank's *How to Help Your Child in School*, is a valuable book for parents written by parents. It will help teachers to interpret the curriculum to parents and help parents understand the program of today's schools at all levels of development. There are two very good chapters concerning the reading program. All of these would be helpful in a school's professional library or a PTA library.

When parents ask for guidance from the teacher in the choice of good literature for their children, teachers need to be prepared to answer such questions satisfactorily. Keeping abreast of new literature for children requires but little time in relation to the value gained.

Recommending the right book for the right person needs to be practiced. A teacher should continually try to gain insight into the literary tastes of the children she is teaching. Too often adults choose books for children that they liked when

they were young, overlooking the improved writings of today with real living interests, and disregarding the tastes of the children for whom they are purchased, so that Christmas gifts lie on shelves, unread, and school libraries have scores of books that simply gather dust.

Book fairs or exhibits are good projects for parent-teacher groups to undertake to bring good literature to the attention of children and adults so that the best books can be selected. Most school libraries are meagerly supplied and would benefit greatly by help from parents' groups.

Teachers and administrators might plan together to allow time at the end of each school day, or some other time when the teacher feels it advantageous, to consistently share good literature with children. In the upper grades, opportunity may be given to the pupils who are good readers to read to the group, but to get full value from the literature, much reading should be done by the teacher, herself. This reading to children, especially in the upper grades, seems to be an art lost in the pressures of today's over-crowded curriculums. However, since completing this study, I am more than ever convinced that it should be given priority over activities of lesser value for these reasons:

1. It builds up a bond of sympathy, understanding, and respect between reader and listener. Many a teacher is loved and remembered years later for this very habit. Increased respect for the teacher brings about increased willingness to learn.

2. It produces a pleasant calmness and quietness at the end of a school day. If there have been any tensions or difficult situations, the short period of sharing good literature together sends both teacher and



pupil home with a "good taste in their mouths" for school. It serves the same quieting purpose after some strenuous or exciting school activity.

3. Children enjoy it. With enjoyment comes greater ease in learning and a desire to master the skills necessary for such an experience.

4. It improves the habit of listening and concentration, a skill for which teachers must strive in these days of many distractions, tensions, and "pre-cooked" entertainment.

5. It produces better mental health. Often a child can be helped to solve his own problems by listening to stories wherein similar problems are solved.

6. It opens the door to a new world for many children. It shows the way to worthwhile desires, appreciations, understandings, and ideals, and helps to build a fine sense of values.

7. Teachers can share with children poems and stories beyond their reading level, but within their level of understanding, helping them to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

8. It gives children an impetus for further reading and will tend to create in them a taste for what is good and what is lasting.

Teachers convinced of the value of such a program will have no difficulty in convincing parents to follow a similar plan in the home. When the sharing of good literature becomes a common daily practice in the home and school, not only will better reading achievement and improved home-school, parent-child and teacher-child relations result, but a heritage of immeasurable value will be given our children. What great rewards for such small effort!

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LOIS V. JOHNSON  
AND  
MARY BANY

## Children Write the Christmas Program

The heritage of the Christmas season, with its feelings of joyousness and goodwill-to-all, should be lived to the fullest by the children in the elementary school. The days before the holiday vacation are days of happy anticipation. Besides the usual routines, there is the added zest of planning for loved ones, of making gifts, cards, and decorations, and of enjoying again the favorite stories and poems of Christmas. These experiences in the lives of children are long lasting and are worthy of teachers' efforts.

An elaborate Christmas program seems

particularly inappropriate to many teachers. There are some communities in which the tradition is so deep that it would be impossible and perhaps unwise to dispense with it. An alternative is for the staff of the school to use the program for the benefit of the children in much the same way that they plan and develop other curricular experiences.

A Christmas program directed toward children's well-rounded growth has the following characteristics:

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The meaning of Christmas is the basic theme and emphasis. The spirit and essence of the season make even practice and work periods pleasant ones for children and teachers as they prepare the program which they will share with others. Arrangements are simple. However, simple stagings can also be effective and dramatic.

All the children participate in the finished production. From the child's viewpoint, it is not enough to have helped paint a piece of scenery. He wants to be a visible member of the final program. Choral speaking, rhythm groups, choruses, as well as individual parts, are ways for large numbers of children to participate.

A flexible plan for the program makes it possible to use a variety of talents and abilities. Children's creative expressions in writing, speaking, singing, dancing, and art will be woven into the final program.

Sharing of ideas and materials by individual children and by groups are used in as many phases of the production as possible.

Children's actions, especially in individual parts, are kept spontaneous rather than practiced to rigid perfection. Practice sessions can be short, rather than time-consuming and disruptive of classroom activities.

With these points as guides, the total program in one school, from initial planning to final results, developed into a satisfying and enjoyable experience for the children.

One rather cold stormy day the class was instructed to put away their work and clear their desks. The teacher read a quiet, thought-provoking Christmas story to the group. After the story was read and discussed, the children were asked, "What impressions come to your mind when you think of Christmas?"

At first the obvious things were mentioned such as the presents, the Christmas tree, and the turkey. As the discussion

progressed, the children were asked, "What kind of feelings or sensations do you have at Christmas time?" After some thoughtful consideration the children began to suggest word-pictures to express what Christmas meant to them.

One child said she always had a shivery, tingling feeling inside when all the lights were turned off and the lighted Christmas tree stood shimmering in the dark.

Others mentioned the fun they had decorating with mistletoe and holly; the family singing carols and reading the Christmas stories together; the smell of the tree and the good things baking in the house; the secrets that everyone tried to keep; the feeling of liking everyone at Christmas.

It was a laughing remark made by a boy that provided the theme for the program.

"What makes Christmas Christmas? It's the good eats of course!"

"Oh, John, it is not!" Sue indignantly retorted, "It's all the nice things people do for one another."

Other children chimed in to support Sue. "There are lots of things that make Christmas! It's not just food!" From the many comments that children made about "What makes Christmas Christmas," the theme evolved.

As yet the children did not know they were planning the program. On the day this was to be introduced to them, the teacher put on the board "What makes Christmas?" and under this wrote, "Sights," "Sounds," "Smells," and "Feelings."

The class was then asked to think of all the words and phrases they could to

illustrate each heading. They repeated many of the thoughts they had given previously, but also new ideas were added.

"Do you think we could plan a Christmas program around the theme, 'What makes Christmas?'"

Of course they thought they could! A plan for three upper-grade rooms working together was presented to them. They learned that they would not be responsible for staging the scenes. They would write the narration which would form the basic plan or frame for the program.

After much discussing and planning, the group decided to have two narrators to introduce each scene which would describe the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings of Christmas.

The class and teacher considered each of the topics. The Sounds of Christmas was the topic chosen first because it seemed the easiest. They studied the comments made previously. These were written on the board.

What makes Christmas?  
The sounds of Christmas.  
People calling Christmas greetings.  
Sleigh bells ringing.  
People laughing.  
People singing.  
Church bells chiming.

By re-arranging, re-phrasing and adding a few lines, the thoughts and phrases were developed until they reached this form:

What makes Christmas?  
The Christmas sounds—  
Singing, laughter all around,  
Sleigh bells jingling through the snow,  
Church bells ringing loud and slow,  
From high above a merry chime  
Seems to say "It's Christmas time."

The children were pleased with their

first efforts and immediately began working on the Sights and Smells of Christmas. Using the same method, they worked out the ideas they wished to express. First, all the phrases concerning the subject under consideration were written on the board. Second, these expressions were re-worked and condensed until a satisfactory pattern was produced. This is the result of the children's composition on "Smells" and "Sights."

What makes Christmas?  
The tangy smell of evergreen.  
So much of Christmas is not seen,  
It's what we feel, and hear, and smell,  
It's stories that we love to tell.

What makes Christmas?  
Sniff the air!  
What Christmas smells are floating there?  
Gingerbread cookies, full of spice,  
Minced pies all sweet and nice,  
Candy canes and sugar plums  
Spice the air when Christmas comes.

What makes Christmas?  
It's all the things that we can see,  
A shining, sparkling Christmas tree.  
It's colored balls and candlelight,  
It's fluffy snowflakes, sparkling bright.

What makes Christmas?  
It's all the toys that give us fun.  
It's many gifts for everyone,  
Trains and planes for the boy,  
Dolls on strings for sister's joy.

When the children had reached this point in writing the narration for the Christmas program, they found they had not included the Christmas Carols or Christmas stories. These themes, they decided, should have been included in the section on "Sounds."

This part of the writing proved difficult. At the suggestion of a class member, the children collected Christmas songs, stories, and poems, and read them. This

put the class in a mood conducive to writing. A great amount of discussion took place before the children decided that while there were many stories and songs about Christmas, they would express only the thought of those which told the story of the Christ Child.

What makes Christmas?  
Its stories told  
Of shepherds watching in the cold.

What makes Christmas?  
It's looking for the guiding star  
That tells us where the heavens are.

A picture of a manger bare  
With baby Jesus lying there.  
It's three kings who travelled far  
Led by this bright and shining star.

These things make Christmas.  
The story of the gracious king  
Whose Alleluia angels sing.  
People who proclaim the birth  
Of Him who wished men peace on earth.  
It's carols sung in praise of Him  
The Holy Child of Bethlehem.  
The story of the Silent Night,  
When all is calm—all is bright.

The children, by this time, were quite skillful. They considered the topic ahead of time and were prepared to present descriptive lines. They read and re-read the verse to be sure the narrators would be able to read the lines easily and expressively.

By the time the children came to "the feelings" of Christmas, they were aware of the intangible, elusive things that are the essence of this season. They thought of the things that stirred their feelings and worked on the phrases that would say what they meant effectively. They began with the thought "all the things that can't be seen, but still are there at Christmas time."

What makes Christmas?  
It's many things we cannot see.  
It's being with the ones you love  
When they gather round the tree.

What makes Christmas?  
We cannot see it—but it's there  
The peace of home on Christmas day,  
The joy, the love, it fills the air.

What makes Christmas?  
It's not the gift, it can be bought.  
What makes the gift a precious thing?  
Because it's wrapped in loving thought.

What makes Christmas?  
It's laughter showing in the eyes,  
It's a tingle-ly feeling deep inside,  
As if there's singing from the skies.

The introduction was written last. Another grade had planned the scenes and they wished to begin the program with some of the gay songs of Christmas such as "Jingle Bells" and "Deck the Halls." As an introduction to the "mood" of the program and to give an opening for the choir, this beginning was written:

What makes Christmas?  
Do you know?  
What gives us all that inward glow  
That Christmas brings?

These things make Christmas.  
Happy, smiling girls and boys  
Wrapped up in thought of Yuletide joys  
And secret things.  
It's decking homes 'mid laughter jolly,  
With mistletoe and sprigs of holly,  
With berries tucked between.

It's not just gifts of books and toys,  
Christmas means the songs we sing,  
Songs that make the rafters ring—  
Come! Deck the halls and sing of joy.

Each section of the narration introduced a scene in which the children performed simple actions, danced, or made a tableau. The chorus was grouped at one side and in front of the stage. The verse-choir sat on the other side. Instrumental music was used in places. The selection of

music and verse related to the script. This part was done by another class. Another group took responsibility for settings and costumes.

The program, with its use of children's

ideas, its simple arrangements and complete participation by all the children, was received enthusiastically by the parents. The children were truly helped to understand "What Makes Christmas."

PAUL WITTY

## Children and TV — A Sixth Report

Parents and teachers have become increasingly concerned about the effect of excessive televising upon the attitudes and behavior of boys and girls. Magazines and newspapers have given considerable attention recently to the ill-effects of televising and have stressed its relationship to undesirable behavior and unfortunate school adjustment. In order to deal fairly with such charges, it is desirable to consider the results of investigations which have yielded data on which conclusions may be tentatively based.

In this article the writer will summarize the results of six yearly studies of TV. During the past six years he has obtained responses concerning TV each year from approximately 2,000 pupils, their parents, and their teachers. The studies were made in Chicago, Evanston, Calumet City, and neighboring communities.

From 1950 on, the ownership of TV sets showed a steady increase. In 1950, 43 per cent of the pupils had TV sets at home; in 1951 the per cent was 68; in 1952, it was 88; in 1953, 92; in 1954, 96; and in 1955, 97. In many classes each child in the room had access in 1955 to a TV set at home; and in some cases there were two or even more sets in the home. Thus, the saturation point appears to have been reached in TV ownership generally. However, the teacher group continued to report fewer sets than did the other groups. At the time of the 1951 study, only 25 per cent had TV sets; this per cent rose to 48 in 1952; and in 1953, to 62. In 1954, 83 per cent of the teachers had sets, and in 1955, 86 per cent. (See Table I)

The time spent with TV changed somewhat from year to year, as Table II shows. In 1950, the elementary pupils spent 21 hours each week with TV; in 1951, the average was slightly lower—19 hours. There was a slight increase during the next two years—to 23 hours of televising each week by the elementary school pupils in 1953. In 1954, the average was 21.5 hours per week, and in 1955, 23.7 hours per week.

Table I  
*Ownership of TV Sets*

PUPILS		TEACHERS	
	<i>Per Cent</i>		<i>Per Cent</i>
1950	43	1950-51	25
1951	68	1952	48
1952	88	1953	62
1953	92	1954	83
1954	96	1955	86
1955	97		

The amount of televising by high school students has been somewhat constant. With the exception of 1953 when the average was 17 hours per week, the average has been fourteen hours per week. For the present year this average was maintained.

In 1950, the parents spent 24 hours on the average each week in televising; this figure

\*The writer is grateful to Mrs. Robert Reuter and her son for tabulating data and to Assistant Superintendent, Paul Pierce, his principals and teachers in Chicago, and to Superintendent Lloyd Michael, Phyllis Bland, and other teachers in the Evanston Township High School, he is indebted for help in making this study.



dropped to about 20 hours in 1951; in 1953 it was about 19 hours per week. In 1954, the average was about 16 hours, while in 1955, it was 21.2 hours.

The teachers were found to spend less time with TV than did the children or the parents.

In 1951, the teachers averaged about 9 hours per week in televiewing; in 1953, the average was 12 hours. In 1954, it was 11.5 hours; and in 1955, 12.5 hours.

This study shows clearly that the prediction holding that the amount of televiewing would

Table II  
*Average Hours Spent Weekly With Television*

	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
Elementary School Pupils	21	19	22.5	23	21.5	23.7
High School Pupils		14	14	17	14.0	14.3
Parents	24	20	21	19	16.3	21.2
Teachers		9	11	12	11.5	12.5

drop sharply after the novelty of sets had worn off has not been fulfilled. In fact, there has been a rather consistent increase in televiewing during the past year. However, it will be noted that the average for the high school pupils changed little. From these studies it is clear that televiewing is a favorite leisure activity of elementary school pupils who persist in spending upwards of 20 hours per week in this activity. High school pupils give much less time to TV, and some high school pupils prefer radio to TV. In fact, the average amount of time given by them each week to radio is about the same as that spent with TV. The reasons for the preference of some high school pupils for radio were: "radio is better to use when you study"; "radio is better for dancing"; "radio has more music and disc jockey programs"; "radio can be played on the beach," and "radio can be listened to as we drive in a car."

Adults, as represented by these parents, seem to have had more time this year to give to TV. About five more hours per week were reported in 1955 than in 1954. The difference may be attributable in part to the strong appeal of some new programs. Several parents wrote comments indicating that the 1955 offerings were more attractive.

In several studies it became clear that amount of televiewing is not related closely to intelligence or to scholarship. Excessive viewing of TV, however, seemed to be associated with

somewhat lower academic attainment. Our studies show a rather consistent trend in this respect. Somewhat similar results have been reported by Jack Greenstein who studied elementary pupils who had TV sets and compared them with pupils who did not have sets at home. Marks earned during their third, fourth, and fifth grades were compared. Greenstein considers that marks were not adversely affected by televiewing.\*

Although TV does not on the whole seem to influence markedly educational attainment, there are individual cases in which its effects are undesirable as reported by teachers and parents. On the other hand, there are children, who have been stimulated to do better work because of interests engendered by TV.

Both teachers and parents continue to report behavior and adjustment problems associated with TV. About half of the teachers and one third of the parents indicated the presence of such problems in 1950. In 1953, the per cent was 28 reported by the teachers, and 30 by the parents. Similar percentages were reported in 1954, 39 per cent by parents and 30 by teachers. In 1955, 36 per cent of the parents reported problems and about one-third of the teachers. The problems centered around such items as

\*Jack Greenstein. "Effect of Television upon Elementary School Grades," *Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. XLVIII (November, 1954), pp. 161-176.

neglect of homework, mealtime disturbance, increased nervousness, fatigue, impoverishment of play, disinterest in school, reduction in reading, and eye strain.

In 1953 and in 1954, a group of teachers made investigations of the children in their classes who spent extremely large amounts of time televising. Some of the children were problem cases, but others were well-adjusted, successful students. In every case of serious maladjustment, factors such as poor home conditions, lack of interest, unfortunate experience and other factors seemed to contribute to the child's difficulties. TV alone could not be held responsible for the undesirable behavior. The teachers concluded that an appraisal of the desirability or the undesirability of televising could be made only by a complete case study of each child. In 1955, similar results were reported, but teachers emphasized the fact that an incident presented on TV might provide an immediate stimulus for undesirable behavior. They indicated that too many crime programs were presented; some deplored the character of the movies many children see on TV during the evening hours.

Parents and teachers stressed the fact that many children read less than they did before TV. In 1955, 43 per cent of the pupils stated that they read less; 45 per cent more; and 12 per cent the same amount. Many parents and teachers are greatly concerned that large numbers of pupils probably read less now than they did before TV, although the average amount of reading has not been altered, and although many children actually read more now. The group that reads less is regarded as a real problem by many parents and teachers.

### Ranks of Favorite Programs

Changes have taken place in the ranks of favorite programs and many new programs have become popular. In 1950, the favorite programs of the children included: *Hopalong Cassidy*, *Howdy Doody*, *Lone Ranger*, *Milton*

*Berle*, *Arthur Godfrey*, and *Small Fry*. Changes occurred rapidly and new favorites appeared. In 1952, *I Love Lucy* became the best liked program of boys and girls, and *My Friend Irma* and *Roy Rogers* were also highly endorsed. And in 1953, *Superman*, *Red Buttons*, and *Dragnet* found their way toward the top of the list. But *I Love Lucy* remained in first place. In 1954, the elementary school pupils liked these programs best: *I Love Lucy*, *Dragnet*, *My Little Margie*, *Roy Rogers*, *Topper*, and *Superman*.

In 1955, almost universal acclaim from the children came to *Disneyland*; and *Rin-Tin-Tin* and *Lassie* became very popular too. *I Love Lucy*, the former favorite, dropped to fourth place.

The preferences of high school students also changed. Only *Arthur Godfrey*, an early favorite, remained among the top five programs preferred by high school students in 1953, with *I Love Lucy* in first place. *Dragnet*, *Colgate Comedy Hour*, and *Red Buttons* were also included among the favorites. In 1954 the high school students in Chicago and Evanston preferred the following: *I Love Lucy*, *Dragnet*, *I Led Three Lives*, *This Is Your Life*, *Colgate Comedy Hour*, *Jackie Gleason*, and *Liberace*. In 1955, *George Gobel* was given first place, followed closely by *Disneyland*; then *Toast of the Town*, *Medic*, *Dragnet*, and *I Love Lucy*.

In 1950, *Arthur Godfrey* and *Milton Berle* were extremely well-liked by the parents. Sports programs, including the ubiquitous wrestling exhibitions, were very popular, too. Choices changed during the period 1950-1955. In 1953, *I Love Lucy* attained first rank, followed by *What's My Line?* and *Omnibus*. *Arthur Godfrey* remained in the list with fourth rank. The 1954 favorites were: *I Love Lucy*, *This Is Your Life*, *See It Now*, *What's My Line?*, *Kraft TV Theater*, and *Arthur Godfrey*. In 1955, these were the best-liked programs: *Person to Person*, *Medic*, *This Is Your Life*, *Disneyland*, and *I Love Lucy*.

Only 25 per cent of the teachers had TV

sets in 1950. An increase in TV ownership gradually raised the per cent until in 1955 it was 86. *What's My Line?* appeared as the first choice in 1951 and continued as a favorite in 1952, 1953, and 1954. The teachers showed less enthusiasm for *I Love Lucy* than did their pupils and the parents during the years 1952 to 1955.

However, some were attracted to this program. In 1953, popular programs of the teachers included: *Meet the Press*, *Omnibus*, *News*, *What's My Line?*, and *Mr. Peepers*. The teachers' preferences in 1954 were: *What's My Line?*, *Kraft TV Theater*, *Fred Waring Show*, *Person to Person*, and *Omnibus*. In 1955, this was the

Table III  
*Favorite Television Programs of Elementary and High School Pupils*

1952	
<i>Elementary School Pupils</i>	<i>High School Pupils</i>
1. I Love Lucy	1. I Love Lucy
2. My Friend Irma	2. Red Skelton
3. Roy Rogers Show	3. Sports
4. Red Skelton	4. Colgate Comedy Hour
5. Tom Corbett	5. What's My Line?
1953	
1. I Love Lucy	1. I Love Lucy
2. Superman	2. Dragnet
3. Red Buttons	3. Colgate Comedy Hour
4. Dragnet	4. Arthur Godfrey
5. Roy Rogers Show	5. Red Buttons
1954	
1. I Love Lucy	1. I Love Lucy
2. Dragnet	2. Dragnet
3. My Little Margie	3. I Led Three Lives,
4. Roy Rogers Show	4. This Is Your Life,
5. Topper, and Superman	Colgate Comedy Hour, and
	Jackie Gleason
	5. Liberate
1955	
1. Disneyland	1. George Gobel
2. Rin Tin Tin	2. Disneyland
3. Lassie	3. Toast of the Town
4. I Love Lucy	4. Medic
5. George Gobel	5. Dragnet and I Love Lucy

order of preference: *Life Is Worth Living*, *Person to Person*, *What's My Line?*, *Omnibus*, and *I Love Lucy*. (See Tables III and IV).

#### Disliked and Desired Programs

The children placed *Howdy Doody* and *Milton Berle* at the top of the list of *disliked* programs in 1952. *Westerns*, *Murder Mysteries*, and *Milton Berle* were in disfavor with parents and teachers. In 1953, the children cited *Howdy Doody*, *Westerns*, *Milton Berle*, and *Captain Video* as unpopular programs, and their parents

indicated strong antipathy to *Murder Mysteries* and *Crime Programs*. *Westerns*, *Milton Berle*, and *Old Movies* followed in the disliked list. In 1954, similar programs were disliked by the children—among them *Howdy Doody*, *News*, and *Captain Video*. In 1955, these were children's disliked programs: *Howdy Doody*, *Medic*, *Arthur Godfrey*, *Boxing*, and *News*. The children said they found their favorite programs displaced by such presentations as *Medic* and *News*. The parents and teachers in 1954 expressed a common dislike for *Westerns* and

Table IV  
*Favorite Television Programs of Parents and Teachers*

1952	
<i>Parents</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
1. I Love Lucy	1. News
2. Arthur Godfrey	2. Meet the Press
3. What's My Line?	3. What's My Line?
4. Mama	4. Clifton Utley
5. Plays, Theater, Drama	5. I Love Lucy
1953	
1. I Love Lucy	1. Meet the Press
2. What's My Line?	2. Omnibus
3. Omnibus	3. News
4. Arthur Godfrey	4. What's My Line?
5. Mr. Peepers	5. Mr. Peepers
1954	
1. I Love Lucy	1. What's My Line?
2. This Is Your Life	2. Kraft TV Theater
3. See It Now	3. Fred Waring Show
4. What's My Line?	4. Person to Person
5. Kraft TV Theater	5. Omnibus
1955	
1. Person to Person	1. Life Is Worth Living
2. Medic	2. Person to Person
3. This Is Your Life	3. What's My Line?
4. Disneyland	4. Omnibus
5. I Love Lucy	5. I Love Lucy

*Crime programs, Wrestling, and Milton Berle.* In 1955, parents and teachers indicated a *dislike* for: *Westerns and Crime Programs, Arthur Godfrey, Milton Berle, Wrestling, Old Movies.*

In 1954 and in 1955 teachers and parents again reported that they would like to see the addition of educational programs that would stimulate children to read. They pointed out the desirability of arranging schedules so that more superior programs for children might be viewed during the early evening hours. Teachers and parents stressed, too, the necessity for discrimination in the choices among current offerings. Some parents reported that family councils have been most effective in improving habits of televiewing. The teachers cited a number of examples of the successful use of TV in fostering interest and engendering successful work in school. A few teachers mentioned the greater interest of high school students in current events and in drama. Moreover, both par-

ents and teachers stressed the need of more programs such as *Ding Dong School, Disneyland, Zoo Parade* and other science presentations, travelogues, and historical offerings. The desirability of better musical offerings, more frequently presented, was mentioned. The low level of much of the humor was also cited.

### Criticisms of TV

One criticism of TV was repeatedly set forth by the parents and teachers—namely, the inferior quality of many TV programs for children. Many parents inquired: "Why can't we have better children's programs?" There is good reason for the concern of parents. The National Association for Better Radio and Television announced in 1954 that crime and violence programs for children had increased 400 per cent during the preceding three years. In a 60-hour study, they found 26 hours of the programming to be "objectionable." Five shows—

*Captain Midnight, Captain Video, Dick Tracy, Eastside Kids, and Ramar of the Jungle*—were judged "most objectionable."

In 1955, this organization published another report which showed that the situation was somewhat improved by the increased availability of other more desirable programs. A release for July 12, 1955 stated:

TV programming for children developed during the past season—along with plans for the year ahead—is the most impressive and encouraging in the history of television. This is the outstanding fact disclosed by our study of shows televised and broadcast for children during the first week of May, 1955.

In Los Angeles, where crime shows dominated TV fare for children a year ago, the volume of "excellent" and "good" programming (evaluated through NAFBRATS Standards for Programs) has increased by 253 per cent. This change is not due to a switch from one type of program to another, but to an overall increase of almost 70 per cent in the hours of programming televised for children.

The amount of time given to crime shows has not decreased. This committee is still alarmed by the fact that 28 half-hours of crime shows produced on film specifically for TV's child audiences are still being televised each week by the seven Los Angeles stations. In addition to this, 26 hours of theatrical westerns featuring crime and violence in action and story theme, were televised during the survey week in hours preceding 9 p.m.

The crime deluge is still with us. However, the force of its influence is being dispelled in some degree by two factors: (1) the steadily declining audiences for crime shows and (2) the availability of programs with positive values.

Although some improvement seems to have taken place, there is a need for further desirable change. It is clear that many programs still feature portrayals of crime and violence. And there are many others of mediocrity.

There is in addition an even larger problem which confronts us in an era of TV. We are faced increasingly with a persuasive culture

that emphasizes purchased leisure and almost effortless recreation. Two decades or more ago, Stuart Chase stressed the mechanization of our leisure and cited the tendency of children and adults to turn to sedentary activities such as riding in an automobile, listening to the radio, and watching other people compete in sports. "Bleacher athletes" instead of participants were being developed generally. Today with TV consuming so much of our time, we should inquire whether we have given up even more frequently than formerly many wholesome physical activities, and desirable group pursuits. And we should inquire, too, concerning the extent to which we are becoming dominated by a search for entertainment—largely effortless and often profitless. Edgar Dale writes:

Our almost compulsive search for entertainment is a malady that can both debilitate and destroy. . . .

We need entertainment just as we need sleep, but we can have far too much of it. Entertainment provides needed vitamins but few calories. We need the meat and potatoes of education.\*

In a similar vein, Marya Mannes comments on the present-day domination of a quest for recreation:

I doubt whether even among the privileged classes during the days of Pericles, Ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance, entertainment was more than periodic and less than an occasion. And I know that during my own average youth, only four or five times a year did we go to a play, and to a movie never more than once a fortnight. These were excitements long anticipated and long remembered. The thought of having them constantly accessible never entered the mind. If it had it would have been rejected as preposterous or sinful. Nowadays it seems preposterous *not* to avail oneself constantly of diversion, since a flick of a knob can produce it.

I do not propose to draw any somber conclusions from this fact of our civiliza-

\*Edgar Dale, Bureau of Educational Research, Ohio State University. "Quotable," *The Nation's Schools*, Vol. 56 (August, 1955), p. 34.



tion except to point out that the whole man or woman does not need or want this constant diversion. That is why, except for professionals concerned either productively or critically with the media, you will find very few people of spiritual or mental substance who turn on television or radio more than a few hours a week. When they do, it is to see reality and not to escape from it. They may look at a play once or twice a week in the evening. But to turn on a crooner, a comic, a band, a panel, a quiz show, or a play during the day is unthinkable, as any self-imposed boredom would be unthinkable. One glimpse of this suffocating surfeit of entertainment (and who in illness has not had it?) is enough to cure any random viewer. Even troubling thoughts are more constructive than the avoidance of them by this means.

A recent TV documentary made by NBC on the effects of television in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the latest large city to get it, confirmed among other things the fact that the great majority of boys and girls there (as elsewhere) do their homework while viewing. . . .

But it is of cosmic indifference to the producers of television whether children's homework suffers from a TV accompaniment (as any teacher will tell you) or whether the baby in the pen hasn't a quiet moment to itself, or whether on a beautiful Saturday or Sunday morning it wouldn't be far better for any child—anywhere—to be out in the sun playing instead of indoors listening to any TV program, good or bad. It is equally indifferent to them, with all their worthy aspirations toward improvement, that they may be upsetting an order of living for adults as well as children to the detriment of human welfare. They will give us, no doubt, better and better Spectaculars. More and more they may lace information adroitly into their entertainment. But never will they ask themselves whether it is right that people should be entertained four-fifths of the day and night and informed one-fifth, or whether the complete reverse might not be the only justifiable pattern to follow.\*

\*Marya Mannes. "The Right To Be Entertained," *The Reporter* (June 30, 1955), pp. 42-43.

The antidote to the undesirable aspects of TV lies in the provision of a constructive program of guidance for children and young people. In working together on such a program, these suggestions might be followed to advantage by parents and teachers:

1. Examine the recreational opportunities of your school and of your community. Try to offer boys and girls abundant opportunities for varied play activities and creative pursuits of many kinds that will balance their craze for sedentary activities such as televiewing.
2. Study the children in your class or home and try to understand their varied interests and needs. Find out the programs they are seeing on TV, and ascertain the amount of time they give to the radio and to the movies. Discuss the merits and limitations of favorite programs. Ascertain their other leisure activities. Offer constructive suggestions so as to bring about balanced programs of recreation.
3. Set up a family or school council to suggest effective ways of budgeting time. Develop criteria for the selection of TV programs and for engaging in other leisure activities.
4. Recognize the fact that the satisfactions obtained from TV are similar to those derived from the movies, the radio, and comic books. Find out the amount of time children devote to these media and the types of presentations they select. Try to offer constructive individual and group guidance.
5. Strive to improve the offerings on TV and the radio. At the present time there is a unique opportunity for parents and teachers to participate in a national movement aiming at the presentation of better TV programs.
6. Help children develop more efficient reading habits and skills so that they will enjoy the act of reading as well as the results. Study their various interests. Try to provide an assortment of reading materials to satisfy and extend wholesome interests. The fact that about forty per cent of our children state that they read less than before the advent of TV is a

matter of concern to many parents and teachers. However, we should bear in mind that about the same per cent read more now. But there is much to be accomplished for those who read less. In this group there are many potentially able students, whose reading skills have not been fully developed or whose interest in reading has not been awakened.

There has been during the past year, a large amount of criticism of the reading ability and the reading habits of boys and girls. Single panaceas have been proposed; for example, the teaching of phonics by parents. Such a single effort would help little in meeting this complex problem. Of course many children need to be helped to develop more effective habits and skills in reading. The ability to recognize new words and to pronounce them is one of these skills. But such children usually need to develop other skills also such as critical reading and rapid silent reading.

Some educators believe that the greatest need is the cultivation of an interest in reading by providing boys and girls opportunities to read a variety of materials of literary excellence. They believe that wide practice in reading different kinds of materials is necessary to develop habits and attitudes that will persist.

It is true that many textbooks especially at the primary levels, include materials that are

too repetitious, too limiting, and consistently uninteresting. But there are textbooks which contain a minimum of such materials. These books introduce children to highly exciting stories—old and new—of unmistakable merit.\* There is in addition the world of children's books also to be utilized in a balanced reading program. Parents and teachers should become acquainted with many excellent recently published books as well as with children's classics, and they should encourage their children to become regular patrons of the library.

In home as well as in school, parents and teachers should strive to provide an atmosphere conducive to wide reading. Although TV is not often the cause of poor reading, it does offer a real temptation for children who read poorly to escape into a pleasant, effortless pastime. For other children, televiewing may consume too much of their time and lead to little development or progress. But TV can become an asset if parents and teachers will attempt not only to help children read better, but also to encourage them to associate reading with interests engendered by worthwhile presentations on TV.

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\*See *The Reading for Interest Series*, D. C. Heath, and *Treasury of Literature*, Charles E. Merrill Company, Wesleyan University Press.

## *Councilletter*

Dear Council Members,

With this issue coming out immediately before another Annual Meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English it is perhaps appropriate for the retiring Senior Past President to prepare a final Councilletter. This writer is completing his fourth consecutive and last year as a member of the Executive Committee. Serving as First Vice-President, then President, and for the last two years as Past President, I have reached graduation time.

Let me share with you a few recollections. Probably I shall remember longest the transition period, for I sat with your officers during the last two years of Wilbur Hatfield's devoted service as elected Secretary-Treasurer and the first two years of J. N. Hook's leadership as Executive Secretary. It was a great personal experience and a significant moment in the life of the Council to pay deep appreciation to Wilbur and to welcome Nick. Mr. Hatfield has carved his name in Council history. Mr. Hook is charting new seas for the Council's future.

That same period of transition brought a new home and a change of address. I guess we burned our bridges behind us and from the ashes of our dead selves will go on to higher things.

Another happy memory is that during those four years two volumes of the Curriculum

Commission reports have been brought to publication, and another is on the verge. Nor is this a recollection of the past but rather a challenge for the future. These books have already become landmarks in language arts education, and the forthcoming Volumes 4 and 5, planned and in the writing, will soon join them as guides to a well-integrated and coordinated program of study in language and literature from pre-school through adult education.

The growth of Council membership has only begun. Though size is not our goal, it is important that the great majority of language arts teachers of the nation be affiliated with the Council. With more members the Council is able to extend its services and its influence. And, incidentally, its present membership would do well to become acquainted with the greatly increased services of the Council in the past year.

Graduation time is appropriately called commencement. Each one of us as we commence a new year faces new challenges and new opportunities. Let us take advantage of the opportunity to join professionally in meeting the challenge to help young and old to use the language more effectively and to appreciate literature more understandingly.

Harlen M. Adams  
Past President

## Current English Forum

In the early weeks of a new school year we are more likely to be thinking of our large, long-range objectives than of the immediate and particular problems of daily teaching, which so soon engross us. Perhaps, therefore, this is an appropriate time to think about why we teach writing in the elementary school and how we ought to do it. Should we put the teaching of spelling and grammar first, instructing and drilling in these, and hope that acceptable compositions will be the result? Or ought we to begin, however difficult it may be, *accepting* the written language our pupils bring with them, encouraging them, at first, to write relatively free of mechanical requirements, and direct our teaching toward the goal of writing that is both significant and mechanically acceptable, upon the needs our pupils' earlier writing reveal?

The first alternative makes for easier, more routinized teaching. It also makes for a certain feeling of security in the pupils. A list of words can be memorized and, spelled on a quiz, each word is either right or wrong. A list of grammar rules can also be memorized, and the answer to "John (lay-lies) on the beach" and similar questions can be neatly scored and recorded. The pupils know "where they stand." And so does the teacher; he has the "standings" in neat columns in the grade book. The worth of these standings too often, however, turns out to be dross and not gold. Many children from homes where some level of sub-standard English is spoken learn how we (or Mr. Webster) say words should be spelled and what the writer of a formal grammar or workbook—with detachable sheets—says is the correct answer to "John lays—lies," "We was—were," or "You had ought-ought." The marks in the grade book prove that the pupils learned these things—once. Then, all too frequently, the boy or girl from the home and neighborhood where illiterate or "vulgar" English is the everyday

language, and who has "learned" our rules for spelling and grammar well enough to pass our quizzes, writes a theme for us which begins: "Last summer when I and my friend was laying on the beach we deecided we had ought to get something to eat . . ." The youngster thinks and feels his words and sentences in the language which he hears and uses outside our classrooms *when he thinks and writes in context*. The children who come from homes where standard English is the everyday medium of communication are simply doing "busywork" in learning—and being quizzed on—formal grammar rules. They seldom make mistakes in short or medium-length sentences on their compositions. The rules are already functioning parts of their nervous systems when they enter our classrooms.

The second alternative requires more patience, more day-to-day ingenuity and greater capacity for communicating with our boys and girls in the classroom. It demands as a first principle that we find out how our children write and what they write about *before* we teach them any spelling lists or any rules for putting words together. It necessitates as a corollary principle that we encourage them to write their themes about—and only about—experiences, problems, ideas, and people in which they have a real and vital interest, that we refrain from imposing our interests on them as topics for writing. This second way forces us to persuade our pupils that writing, of any sort that is important, is *not* mechanically produced for mechanical grading by a teacher, that any written words worth writing are written to communicate something interesting to the writer to someone else or to others. Class discussions skillfully but naturally guided by us as teachers can lead the students to reflect upon their adjustments to their family lives, neighborhoods, and playmates; to want to express themselves about their hobbies; to

try to think out on paper the real questions and problems they have about so many things in their worlds. Our more difficult alternative calls upon us, thirdly, to find the great majority of our spelling, punctuation, and grammar lessons in the sentences—or attempts to construct them—on the papers of the children who are writing about things they have something to say about. The grammatical errors of the faraway adult who invented them for a book are of far less interest to boys and girls than the mistakes they themselves make.

The following of this other road to the teaching of good writing, and to the acceptable English mechanics which good writing should embody, makes a constant demand upon us to let the pupils share their writing with each other in the classroom as well as with us. As a motivating factor this regular sharing of experiences, observations, and treatments of ideas in the classroom is of great importance. The youngster who has written a theme which is meaningful to him is likely to take very seriously the criticisms of his classmates who hear him or the teacher read his theme aloud. Often more seriously, however much it may wound our pedagogic pride to admit it, than the written or spoken comments of the teacher. Another factor of significance is our own attitude as teachers toward the writing of our students. If we make our students feel that we are interested primarily only in mere correctness of spelling, grammar, and punctuation, then we will have only ourselves to blame when the themes they hand in struggle to achieve these mechanical norms or even succeed in achieving them, but lack any real meaning, point, or

life. If we are to make our pupils feel that the effort to master the difficult skills that lead to meaningful, interesting, and *mechanically acceptable* written English is a worthwhile one, we must make them believe that we are as interested in what they have to say and in the style and organization of how they say it, as we are in the correctness of their spelling, the agreement of their subjects and verbs, and their use of commas. Unless we *are* as interested in these things, many of our youngsters will come to the more advanced requirements of secondary school and college English courses with the conviction that the be-all and end-all of writing in school is to beat the teacher at the game of error-hunting. We should cultivate the habit of praising and pointing to the qualities of good compositions in classroom discussion. And we should develop the equally important habit of criticizing the shortcomings of fair and poor papers only in an objective, constructive manner. "I've chosen Bill's sentence only because it's an example of an error several of you are still in the habit of making."

From time to time the present writer hopes to deal with more particular problems of teaching writing and with what he hopes will be helpful ways of dealing with them. He welcomes news of the experiences and successful methods of others.

Edward L. Anderson  
Test Specialist in  
Communications  
Educational Testing Service  
Princeton, New Jersey

September 14, 1955

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# The Educational Scene

Edited by WILLIAM A. JENKINS<sup>1</sup>

## Commercial television

Along with the growth of educational television many observers are reporting optimistically that the worlds of education and television grow closer together each year. We have read their reports cheerfully because population coverage by ETV is still something short of adequate and it will be so when all of the transmitters now under construction and on drawing boards start sending out their signals.

To say that the melange of offerings put on the air by the networks is education is to ask the reader to accept *education* in its broadest sense. To be sure, a curriculum consisting only of the best of television would be a spotty curriculum, lacking scope, sequence, and objectives. Moreover, evaluation of its effectiveness would have to be reserved for "think-pieces." There just isn't any objective data available.

But not to call some of the recent offerings of television educational, as well as not to give a nod of appreciation and gratitude to the networks and sponsors, would be to vote for more wrestling matches, pie throwing contests, and \$64,000 questions. Hidden among the later programs and the news and sports in recent months have been programs that exemplify the best in cultural and educational aims and the high, fine-print aspirations of the broadcasters' and FCC codes.

For the youngest, Ding Dong School has continued to give good pre-school preparation. *Medic* has brought to life the world of medicine, albeit at times melodramatically. *Adventure* viewers have been able to travel from the atom to Swinburne. *You Are There* has taken viewers into history, sometimes violently, sometimes dramatically, but usually artistically. Shakespeare has made TV, thanks to Dr. Frank Baxter. *Zoo Parade* has continued to add to our

knowledge of animals (and zoos), *Today* has consistently maintained high standards of reporting and reviewing (attested to by an increasing number of schools which use the program). Walt Disney (audience: 6-60 years) has added to our knowledge of science and given us many a good, clean chuckle, even after the fourth showing of a particular program in one season. (Perhaps when the manufacturers permit Davy Crockett to pass back into history, we presume after the Christmas season, we can expect new and more varied offerings from Mr. Disney).

The most striking among television's offerings, however, has been the dramatic productions. Recent months have given us high quality performances and excellent choice of pieces. Thornton Wilder's "The Skin of Our Teeth," and "Our Town"; Carlo-Menotti's "The Saint of Bleeker Street"; "Macbeth"; "Romeo and Juliet"; and plays on the lives of Socrates, Schumann-Heink, Poe, and Damon and Pythias come quickly to mind. The future will bring us "Richard III," Maxwell Anderson "High Tor," some Shaw plays, and repeats of "Peter Pan" and "Amahl and the Night Visitors."

These are the Junior Literary Guild selections for November:

For boys and girls 5 and 6 years old:

*The Peevish Penguin* by Earle Goodenow  
Wilcox & Follett Company, \$2.00

For boys and girls 7 and 8 years old:

*Pilgrim Thanksgiving* by Wilma Pitchford  
Hays Coward-McCann, Inc., \$2.50

For boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years old:

*Kim of Korea* by Faith Norris and Peter Lumn  
Julian Messner, Inc., \$2.75

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<sup>1</sup>Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee.



William A. Jenkins

For girls 12 to 16 years old:

*Borghild of Brooklyn* by Harriett H. Carr  
Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, Inc., \$2.75

For boys 12 to 16 years old:

*Treasure in the Depths* by Robert Uhl  
Prentice-Hall, Inc., \$2.75



### Children's theatre

Three books in the growing area of dramatics for children have been published by the Children's Theatre Press, Cloverlot, Anchorage, Kentucky: *Stories to Dramatize*, edited by Winifred Ward; *Miniature Plays*, by Madge Miller; and *Twenty-one Years with Children's Theatre*, by Charlotte B. Chorpennig

*Stories to Dramatize* is a collection of about 80 plays which may be dramatized by the four groups in the 5-14 age range. Most children's favorites are included, such as "Ask Mr. Bear," "How the Robin's Breast Became Red," "Tyll Ulenspiegel's Merry Pranks," and "The Prince and the Pauper." Several of the best loved Bible stories are in the volume—"The Good Samaritan," "The Prodigal Son," and "Pharaoh's Daughter Finds Little Moses." Christmas, Easter, and the seasons have their stories, too. It appears to be a very excellent collection.

*Miniature Plays* (Volume I) includes four plays in the form in which they were presented by the Knickety-Knockety Players of the Pittsburgh Miniature Theatre: "Pinocchio," "Show White and Rose Red," "Robinson Crusoe," and "Puss in Boots." Each script is for approximately an hour's production.

In *Twenty-one Years with Children's Theatre*, Miss Chorpennig reminisces on her experiences with the Goodman Children's Theatre in Chicago. She also points to much that she learned from the children she worked with.

Write to Children's Theatre Press, Cloverlot, Anchorage, Kentucky, for further information about these books. Dramatization rights for the plays are reserved.



### Johnny can read

Random House says Johnny *can* read. Young J.Q. Public, "happily unaware of the controversy that now rages about the whys and wherefores of his reading prowess, has consumed millions of books published by Random House in the past five years," says a recent news release. The release goes on to say that during that period Johnny has read six million Landmark books, a million and a quarter of the Walter Farley Black Stallion volumes, and half a million Dr. Seuss books, plus whopping numbers of Farley and Seuss books in book club sales.

To see that Johnny continues to read, Random House is publishing more of the same. Ten new American Landmark Books and five new World Landmark Books have been released. In addition, Dr. Seuss's *On Beyond Zebra*, Walter Farley's *The Island Stallion Races*, two Davy Crockett books—one in the Landmark series for frontiersmen 9-16 and a picture book for young Crocketteers—and four Allabout books have been published.

The new American Landmark Books are:  
*Old Ironsides, the Fighting Constitution*, by Harry Hansen

*The Mississippi Bubble*, by Thomas B. Costain  
*Kit Carson and the Wild Frontier*, by Ralph Moody

*Robert E. Lee and the Road of Honor*, by Hodding Carter

*Guadalcanal Diary*, by Richard Tregaskis  
*Commodore Perry and the Opening of Japan*, by Ferdinand Kuhn

*Davy Crockett*, by Stewart H. Holbrook  
*Clara Barton, Founder of the American Red Cross*, by Helen Dore Boylston

*The Story of San Francisco*, by Charlotte Jackson

*Up the Trail from Texas*, by J. Frank Dobie  
The World Landmark Books are:

*The Exploits of Xenophon*, by Geoffrey Household

*Captain Cook Explores the South Seas*, by Armstrong Sperry

*Marie Antoinette*, by Bernardine Kiely

*Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre*, by Anne Terry White

*The French Foreign Legion*, by Wyatt Blas-singame

The Allabout books are:

*All About the Atom*, by Ira M. Freeman

*All About Birds*, by Robert S. Lemmon

*All About Our Changing Rocks*, by Anne Terry White

*All About Rockets and Jets*, by Fletcher Pratt

### More on Johnny

Anyone looking for still another view of Rudolph Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read* can find it in the *Michigan Educational Journal* for September. Elizabeth Drew, psychologist and reading consultant for the Lansing Public Schools, analyzes Flesch's tenuous and unsupported position on the phonics question. Beyond this, Miss Drew sees Flesch's attack an opportunity for teachers to examine why they do the things they do.

### Write for

Reproduction of portrait of the real Davy Crockett, done by S. S. Osgood, lithographer, together with a copy of Crockett's handwritten acknowledgement of it. Size is 10" x 15". Limit one to a teacher. Write to State Teachers Magazines, Inc., 307 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago 1. Enclose three cents.

*Portfolio of Teaching Techniques No. 2*. Compiled by the editors the *Teacher's Letter*, the Portfolio includes brief discussions, taken from professional educational magazines, textbooks, monographs, and research studies, of seven areas in teaching. A good aid for keeping the busy teacher up with current trends. Write to Arthur C. Croft Publications, New London, Conn. \$.75.

*When and How*, a plan for teaching with the SVE filmstrips, "Phonics: A Key for Better Reading," "Your Dictionary and How to Use It," and "Words: Their Origin, Use, and Spelling." Write to Society for Visual Education,

Inc., 1345 Diversey Parkway, Chicago 14. Free.

*How to Use the Library*, by B. M. Santa and L. L. Hardy. A clearly written booklet, illustrated with cartoons, which provides junior and senior high school pupils with basic library information. Write to Pacific Books, Palo Alto, Calif. Price is not known.

*The Notable Educational Books of 1954*, an annual list prepared by the staff of the Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore. Reprinted from the May NEA *Journal*. Order from the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore. Five cents each.

*Aids in selection of materials for children and young people*, a handy eight-page leaflet compiled by a joint committee of the NEA and the ALA to assist teachers and librarians in selecting books, films, and recordings. Order from the ALA, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago 11. \$3 for 50.

*Distinguished Children's Books of 1954*, and of 1953, two reprints from the ALA *Bulletin* (April 1954 and 1955). Brief annotations are included along with the basic facts of publication. Teachers and librarians wishing to add recent books to the children's collections may find the reprints helpful. Write to the ALA, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago 11.

*Book Collections of Royalty-Free Plays and Program Material*, a descriptive list of 19 volumes for the various grade levels and on several specific themes. Write to Plays, Inc., 8 Arlington Street, Boston 16.

*Best Books for Children and Youth*, a catalog of about 2000 titles, graded and indexed by subject. Write to Iowa State Education Association Library Service, 409 Shops Building, Des Moines 12. Price 35 cents.

### A-V in teaching reading

*Audio-Visual Materials for Teaching Reading* is a very extensive listing of films, filmstrips, slides, pictures, recordings, and special devices which can be used in the teaching of reading and for enriching reading instruction and experiences. Compiled by Robert Leestma

of the Audio-Visual Education Center of the University of Michigan, the 105-page booklet gives complete information on many useful but little known materials. Items have not been evaluated by Mr. Leestma.

Write to Slater's Bookstore, Inc., 336 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Price \$1.50.

### New film catalog

United World Films has released three useful new catalogs:

*Instructional Films and Filmstrips*, a descriptive list of 275; *U. S. Government Films and Filmstrips*, a directory of 3,000 motion pictures and filmstrips from departments and agencies of the government; and *16mm Catalog of Universal-International and J. Arthur Rank Features*, 450 titles for entertainment. For copies write to United World Films, 1445 Park Avenue, New York 29.

### Curriculum bulletin

*Creative Writing*, Volume XI, has been

published by the San Diego City Schools. Written and illustrated by elementary school pupils, the volume contains excellent examples of the creative thinking pupils can do when skillfully guided and stimulated. Write to the superintendent of schools, San Diego.

An institute on reading will be held November 15 to 19 under the sponsorship of the Betts Reading Clinic, Haverford, Pennsylvania on the subject *Basic Skills in Reading*. The institute will include demonstrations, lectures, discussions, and small group seminars focused on reading needs in classroom situations, kindergarten through college. Among the speakers who will participate are Dr. Matilda Bailey, Dr. Emmett A. Betts, Miss Dilys Jones, Dr. Ethel Maney, Mrs. Elizabeth Nemoy, Miss Ruth E. Oaks, Dr. Linda C. Smith, Miss Carolyn M. Welch, Mrs. Rosemary Green Wilson, Miss Josephine Wolfe, and others. The headquarters hotel will be the Benjamin Franklin Hotel, Philadelphia.

## UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE—NOVEMBER 22, 23

Arrangements have just been completed to make possible a United Nations Institute to be held in the U.N. Building in New York on the Tuesday and Wednesday before the NCTE convention. Sponsoring the Institute will be New York University, the United Nations, and the National Council of Teachers of English.

The program will be an informational one intended to familiarize teachers with details of

United Nations organization and operation. Observations of U.N. groups in session will also be planned. The registration fee of \$10.00 will include the cost of two luncheons at the U.N. plus a guided tour of the Secretariat Building. This fee should be mailed to Professor Frederick L. Redefers, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York 3. Questions about details of the Institute should also be addressed to Professor Redefers.



May Hill Arbuthnot



Margaret Mary Clark

# BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Edited by MAY HILL ARBUTHNOT

*Mrs. Arbuthnot is well-known as a writer and lecturer in the field of children's literature. She is the author of CHILDREN AND BOOKS (Scott, Foresman, 1947) and three anthologies, combined in the single volume, THE ARBUTHNOT ANTHOLOGY (Scott, Foresman, 1953).*

*MARGARET MARY CLARK reviews books of science, social studies, and biography. Miss Clark is head of the Lewis Carroll Room, Cleveland Public Library, and editor of ADVENTURING WITH BOOKS (National Council of Teachers of English, 1950).*

## Picture-Stories for the Youngest

*Play With Me.* Pictures and text by Marie Hall Ets. Viking, 1955. \$2.50. (2-5)

Of all the picture-stories Marie Ets has made for children, this one is the loveliest. No magic or fantasy here, but the record of a frisky little girl setting off for a walk in the meadow on a summer's day. She chases one small creature after another, trying to persuade it to play with her. After a series of disappointments she learns to sit still and wait, with the most joyous results. In soft browns, yellows, and grays the pictures are as beguiling as the demure little heroine of these adventures.

*One Mitten Lewis.* By Helen Kay. Illustrated by Kurt Werth. Lothrop, 1955. \$2.00. (4-8).

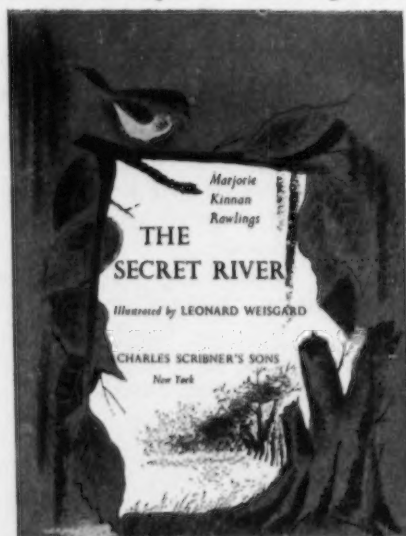
Lewis loved the mittens his mother knitted for him and the mittens she bought for him, but still he shed a mitten here and a mitten there. He was finally reduced to wearing one blue and one yellow or one red and one brown mitten, and his friends laughed at him. One Mitten Lewis did not like this, but he stood it fairly well until he discovered a One-Mitten-Girl who would not play at all because she was so ashamed of her odd hand coverings. The way those two children solved their problem

makes a satisfying ending. This is a gay story with colorful pictures which are bound to please all mitten-losers and their friends.

## Two Secret Places

*The Secret River.* By Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Illustrated by Leonard Weisgard. Scribner's, 1955. \$2.50. (8-10).

There are two books this year about secret places where the spirit can take refuge and re-



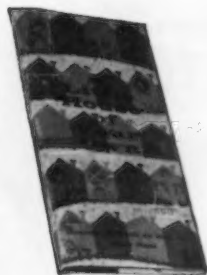
*The Secret River.*



turn strengthened. The first of these books is by Marjorie Rawlings, the only book she ever wrote for children. It lay unpublished because she planned sometime to expand it, but it is perfect as it is. Calpurnia was a little girl who made up poems wherever she went. And wherever she went her dog Buggy-horse went too. He was a comfort even if he was lazy. When hard times came, Calpurnia knew she must turn hard times to soft times by catching some fish. Her friend, Mother Albirtha, told her to follow her nose into the forest and she would find the Secret River full of fish. Sure enough, there it was, still, beautiful, and full of fish. But it was dark when Calpurnia finished fishing, and getting home was not easy. With the help of Buggy-horse and the memory of the Secret River she came through safely and her fish turned hard times to soft times just as she hoped. But where was the Secret River? Mother Albirtha said there wasn't any such river, it was only there because she needed it, and now it wasn't anymore. But Calpurnia knew better. It was in her mind. "The sky is gold and the river is blue. river, river, I love you," she sang. Calpurnia is a real child, drawing strength from her faithful dog, from the goodness and beauty of the world she lives in and from "the secret place of the Most High" a river of dreams. The beautiful format of this book, brown pages and lettering, with Leonard Weisgard's tender and imaginative pictures in wood greens and browns, add much to the charm of this book.

*A Little House of Your Own.* By Beatrice Schenk de Regniers. Drawings by Irene Haas. Harcourt, 1955. \$1.75. (5-7).

The second book about secret places is for younger children, but it too has unusual significance. The writer assumes that being a child you live with your mother and father and you like to play with other children. But there are times when you want everyone to let you alone, grownups and children too. Then you like to go to that little house of your own. It may be



under the diningroom table, if there is a down-to-the-floor cover on it, or it may be up in a tree or behind an umbrella or in between some thick bushes. But wherever it is, it is your very own little place and no one should bother you when you are there. The gay drawings show smiling children peering out of their secret places, watching the busy world go by while they sit still and snug within. Or perhaps their feet show and you can guess how quiet they are and hidden. The pictures interpret perfectly the mood, sometimes lively, sometimes withdrawn, action without and peace within. The sooner a child discovers his Secret River or his own Little House the better for his growing spirit.

#### An Old Favorite

*The Travelling Musicians.* By the Grimm Brothers. Drawings by Hans Fischer. Harcourt, 1955. \$3.00. (4-8).

Last year this column expressed the hope that someday American children might see Hans Fischer's pictures for "The Brementown Musicians," not knowing that the translation and American rights were already underway. Here is the book, and a book to crow over as lustily as the cock crows in the story. These are the only pictures that have ever displaced in our memory Leslie Brooke's illustrations for the same tale. Mr. Fischer's donkey is a sweet looking soul, the dog a perky hound, the cat melancholic and the cock a glorious creature. The pictures of their feast, the rout of the robbers, the final luxurious bedding down of



*The Travelling Musicians.*

the weary musicians in the robbers' house are unsurpassed. Children turn back again and again to that double-page spread showing a star-filled night sky with the travelers looking wistfully in through the lighted windows of the robbers' cozy cottage. Envy the children who first encounter these pictures of a favorite story.

### Two Arctic Animal Tales

*Seloe.* The Story of a Fur Seal. By Betty John. Illustrated by Marie Nonnast. World, 1955. \$2.75. (10 - ).

*Amikuk.* By Rutherford Montgomery. Illustrated by Marie Nonnast. World, 1955. \$2.75. (10 - ).

The life story of any wild animal is necessarily a series of dangers, escapes, injuries, recoveries, mating and breeding. Both of these books follow the conventional pattern but each tells a unique and appealing story. Mrs. John's grandmother was the first white woman to live on the arctic Pribilof islands, and she told these stories of the hunted seals to her grand daughter. Seloe is an endearing arctic youngster, but his survival in that stormy ocean seems something of a miracle without the additional menace of the hunters. The seals' docile sub-

mission to these men, their uncomplaining journey to their death is a piteous thing and a strange one considering the ferocity with which they fight their rivals and other animals. Seloe escapes being clubbed to death because his valuable fur has been scarred in a battle with the killer whale. He lives to mate and



*Amikuk*

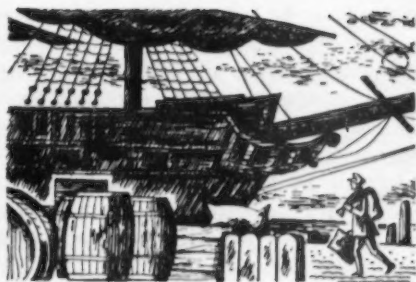
breed in those cold, stormy islands, This is Mrs. John's first juvenile. The story is sometimes delayed by the introduction of too many arctic words and occasional ruminations. But on the whole, she has told her story well and it is a moving tale.

Mr. Montgomery tells his story of a sea otter with his usual expertness. Originally unafraid of man and full of childlike curiosity, it was almost exterminated before it discovered that man is its deadliest enemy. Although his story is centered on the survival of an otter family and its young, Mr. Montgomery manages also to enlist the reader's sympathies for the half starved, penniless Aleutian natives to whom an otter skin meant food and a few meager comforts. Young Peter, an Aleut, intended to hunt the otters. But when he held the crying otter baby in his hands, he changed suddenly into the animals' guardian against his own people. It is a grim drama full of excitement and suspense, a tale of survival both for the otters and the native Aleutians. The description of the otter family with the baby, Amikuk, makes Peter's conversion into a one-man protectorate understandable. And the conclusion justifies his risks and self sacrifice.

### Mystery and Adventure

*Ice to India.* By Keith Robertson. Illustrated by Jack Weaver. Viking, 1955. \$2.50. (12-16).

No two stories by Keith Robertson are alike except that they are well written and absorbing. This one has as masterly a set of villains and as hair-raising action as *Treasure Island*. It is superb storytelling with every member of the Mason family as vividly portrayed as the motley wretches who boarded the *Hope* Elizabeth determined to prevent the delivery of a cargo of ice to India. The Mason family was already near ruin and this hazardous enterprise would either sink or save their line of ships. When John Mason was struck down by some carelessly handled cargo the family suspected it was no accident, but it left the ship without a captain. Not to be downed without a struggle,



*Ice to India.*

the old Captain Mason came out of retirement, added young Nathaniel to the crew and sailed on schedule. Together the old and young Masons with the help of a few loyal members of the crew, managed to circumvent the plotters and get the ice through to India and to a great fortune. When the ship returned Old David had proved that once a captain, always a commander. Young Nathaniel had learned sailing from the biggest villain of them all and the Mason family welcomed the adventurers home with joy and pride.

*Deer River Raft.* By Elizabeth Lansing. Illustrated by Marc Simont. Crowell, 1955. \$2.50 (8-12).

It is surprising that cattle rustlers would have the temerity to invade the Deer Mountain country after those amateur detectives, Fred and Hank, ably handicapped by Janey, had captured deer poachers. But they did. When it started Fred had nothing on his mind but to



*Deer River Raft*

elude Janey and get Hank started building a raft. But Janey did have something on her mind—a star-faced heifer she had talked into docile companionship. Pretty silly, Fred thought. But while a stranger helped the two boys build their raft, cattle began to disappear and Joe Patch, the lazy game warden, was so deeply involved that he was finally jailed. The boys knew this was a mistake, but while they were trying to clear Joe, Janey landed in the middle of everything and really turned the trick. Joe was cleared and the villain was not the man the boys suspected. Lively action, a first-rate mystery, amusing characters, and two enterprising boys make a good story with Janey for an extra satisfaction to the girls who will like this book as much as the boys do.

### Science

*When You Go to the Zoo.* By Glenn O. Blough and Marjorie H. Campbell. Illustrated with photographs. Whittlesey House. 1955. \$2.75. (9-12).

For the teacher who is planning a trip to the zoo with her class, this book offers very practical material to prepare the children in



*When You Go to the Zoo.*

advance. There are useful chapters on acquiring animals for the zoo, reproducing the natural environments of the animals at the zoo, and feeding and caring for them. A final chapter tells of particularly famous zoo animals and where they are located. The entertaining informal style of writing makes it possible for primary teachers to read sections of the book verbatim to young children, to introduce a zoo unit, or a trip to the zoo. The format of the book will appeal to upper elementary readers with its many action-photographs of animals and attractive generous-size print.

*The Swans of Willow Pond.* By Olive L. Earle. Illustrated by the author. Morrow. 1955. \$2.00. (7-10).



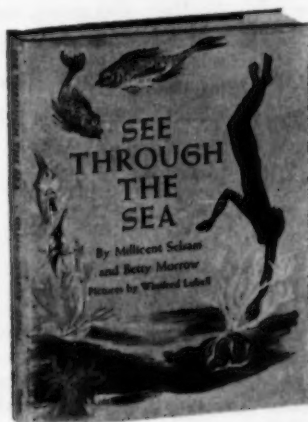
*The Swans of Willow Pond.*

Between one winter and the next, the young swan had found his mate, and helped care for and protect the five young cygnets born in the spring, until they were ready for their first winter flight. In this brief nature cycle, the author introduces a rich fund of information on the building of the nest, hatching of the eggs, and the dangers encountered by the small cygnets in their struggle for survival. Written by the author of *Robins in the Garden*, this introductory nature book on swans has the same distinction and appeal as its predecessor.

*See through the Sea.* By Millicent Selsam and Betty Morrow. Illustrated by Winifred Lubell. Harper. 1955. \$2.50. (8-12).

Many kinds of creatures live at the varying

depths of the sea, from the "sunlit waters on top" to the "icy black waters of the far depths of the sea." The authors have undertaken a novel approach in presenting this subject to younger readers, introducing a bathysphere to take them down to the deeper waters to observe life at the lower sea levels. Tiny diagrams at the left of each picture indicate the depths, in relation to land, at which they are seeing vary-



ing types of sea life. The illustrations are drawn on sea-color backgrounds which grow deeper in coloring until they are black at the lowest depth. *See through the Sea* offers a fresh approach to the study of sea life, and emphasizes the point that different kinds of water animals remain in their own environment where pressure, temperature and food supply meets their needs. The book is an excellent addition to material on animal adaptation as well as on sea life.

*Walt Disney's Living Desert.* By Jane Werner and the Staff of the Walt Disney Studio. Simon and Schuster. 1954. \$2.95. (9 and up).

*Walt Disney's Vanishing Prairie.* By Jane Werner and the Staff of the Walt Disney Studio. Simon and Schuster. 1955. \$2.95. (9 and up).

Based on Walt Disney's nature films, these two True-Life Adventure books impress and delight the reader first with the rare beauty of their color photography. The content of both books is also of a high order. Each book gives a background of the area it is describing, and then tells of the animals, birds, reptiles, flora and fauna of the region. The most absorbing information is about the living creatures, their habits, and struggles for survival. There is a warmth and sympathy in the presentation of this material, much of it based on observation, that makes for very entertaining reading. A glossary in each book lists and describes the animals and other phenomena peculiar to the region. The books would be invaluable to supplement the study of geography as well as for pleasure reading and nature study. The pictures are an aesthetic treat!

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